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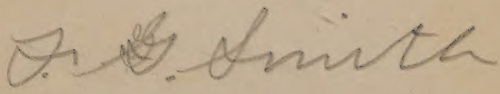

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The Riverside Literature Series

JOHNSON AND GOLDSMITH

ESSAYS BY

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

EDITED BY

WILLIAM P. TRENT

WITH ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR STUDY

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MACAULAY.

THERE can be little doubt that Lord Macaulay is the most popular writer of English prose that this century has produced. Thousands of copies of his *History of England* are still sold every year, and travellers tell us that if an Australian settler possesses three books only, the first two will be the Bible and Shakespeare, and the third, Macaulay's *Essays*. And yet his authority as a critic and historian has been shaken, and his capacity as a poet — for his *Lays of Ancient Rome* is a very popular book — seriously questioned. Nor is his popularity confined to any one circle of readers. Cultivated men and women in their conversation and writings assume a knowledge of his works as a matter of course, but the intelligent laboring man, who is striving for an education, is equally, perhaps more, familiar with them. It is plain that a writer who makes such a wide and lasting appeal deserves careful study, and that a brief survey of his life cannot be without interest.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born October 25, 1800, at Rothley Temple in Leicestershire. His father Zachary was a Scotchman of probity and talents, who was a distinguished promoter of abolition. Macaulay, therefore, came honestly by the middle-class virtues and defects that are so salient in his character. He was a precocious, nay rather a wonderful child, but does not appear to have been spoiled. His memory was prodigious and his reading enormous, while his faculty for turning out hundreds of respectable verses was simply phenomenal. After a happy period of schooling he entered Cambridge, where he won prizes for verse, and made a reputation for himself as a scholar and speaker, but failed of the highest honors on

account of his inaptitude for mathematics. He graduated at twenty-two, was elected a Fellow of Trinity two years later, and the next year startled the world by his brilliant essay on Milton in the *Edinburgh Review*. From this time his career was one of almost unbroken success. He was called to the bar in 1826, but gave more time to his writing and to his political aspirations than to his profession. In 1830 he was elected to the House of Commons through the patronage of Lord Lansdowne, and began his career as a staunch Whig at one of the most important crises in English history, — that of the first Reform Bill.

It is quite plain that if Macaulay had taken seriously to politics at this juncture he would have made a name for himself among English statesmen, or at least among English orators. The speeches he delivered were enthusiastically received, he stood high with the ministers of a party just coming into power, he had the courage of his convictions, he had the wide erudition that has been a tradition with English statesmen, and he had the practical ability to conduct a political canvass (for the new borough of Leeds); but he liked the adulation of society a little too well, and his income was not sufficient to let him bide his time. Dinners at Holland House and breakfasts with Rogers were delightful, no doubt, as delightful as the letters in which he described them to his favorite sister Hannah; and so too was the praise he got for his articles in the *Edinburgh;* but this devotion to society and literature could hardly have been kept up along with an entirely serious and absorbing pursuit of political honors. He was probably well advised, therefore, when in 1834 he accepted the presidency of a new law commission for India and a membership of the Supreme Council of Calcutta. It meant banishment, but it meant also a princely income of which half could be saved. So he set out, taking his sister Hannah with him, for he was a bachelor, discharged his duties admirably, and returned to England in 1838.

On his return he reëntered Parliament and served with distinction but not with conspicuous success. His genius had been diverted and his desires were more than ever divided. He obtained a seat in Lord John Russell's cabinet and supported the Whigs on all great questions, but he was better known as the author of the *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842) and the *Essays*. He lost his seat for Edinburgh in 1847, having been too outspoken and liberal in his views, yet this meant little to one who was a student by nature and who was about to bring out the first two volumes of the most popular history ever written (1849). The remaining decade of his life was practically the only period in which his energies were undivided. He was indeed reëlected to Parliament from Edinburgh without his solicitation, and he was raised to the peerage in 1857, being the first man to receive such an honor mainly for literary work; but he did little besides labor on his *History* and make notable contributions to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Other honors of various sorts were showered on him and his fame reached the proportions of Byron's, but his health began to fail and he did not live long enough to experience any reaction. He died of heart trouble on December 28, 1859, in the fulness of his intellectual powers, and leaving his great history incomplete.

The chief reasons for Macaulay's tremendous popularity are not far to seek. He possessed a style which whether metallic, as has been claimed, or not, is at all times clear and strenuous. He simply commanded attention by his positive assurance of statement, and, when once he had obtained it, took care not to lose it through any obscurity. Rather than indulge in qualifications that might embarrass the reader, he chose, it may be unconsciously, to state half truths as whole truths, and to play the advocate while posing as the critic. The world has always loved the man who knows his own mind, and Macaulay knew his and proclaimed the fact loudly. Then again the world has always loved the strong man who is not too far aloof from it to

hold many of its prejudices and opinions. This was just the case with Macaulay, who was little more than a middle-class Englishman with vastly magnified powers. Subtlety of intellect and delicacy of taste were as far from him as they have always been from a majority of his countrymen, but dogmatic assurance and optimistic confidence in whatever was English were his in full measure. The very qualities that made Tennyson for a long time eclipse Browning made Macaulay eclipse Carlyle, and in both cases a natural reaction set in. Critics called attention to the artificial balance of Macaulay's sentences, and to the brazen ring of his verses; they pointed out his blindness to much that is highest and purest in literature; they convicted him of partisanship and made short work of his assumptions of omniscience. In all this they had considerable truth on their side, but as was natural they went to extremes, and the pendulum of opinion is now swinging in Macaulay's direction again. Mr. Matthew Arnold was right when he insisted on Macaulay's middle-class limitations, but he went too far when he practically denied that Macaulay had any claim to the title of poet. Schoolboys and older readers have not been entirely deluded when they have been carried away by the swing of *Ivry* and of *Horatius*. The essay on Milton has done good to thousands of readers, though its critical value is slight in the extreme. The third chapter of the *History*, describing the England of 1685, remains one of the most brilliant pieces of historical narration ever penned, no matter how partisan Macaulay may have been in the remainder of the work. However much his assumptions of omniscience may vex us, we must perforce admit that no modern specialist has ever known his peculiar subject better than Macaulay knew his chosen period of history, the reigns of James II. and William III. Theorize as much as we will about the pellucid beauties of an unelaborated style, we must confess that if the object of writing be to reach and influence men, Macaulay's balanced,

antithetical style is one of the most perfect instruments of expression ever made use of by speaker or writer. We may complain that Macaulay often leaves his subject and wanders off into space, but we have to confess with Mr. Saintsbury that he is one of the greatest stimulators of other minds that ever lived. In short we must conclude that although the brilliant historian and essayist has no such claim to our veneration as a great poet like Wordsworth, or a great novelist like Scott, or a great prophet like Carlyle, nevertheless his place is with the honored names of literature, and his fame is no proper subject for carping and ungenerous criticism.

With regard now to his individual works the highest praise must of course be given to his *History*. In spite of its incompleteness and its partisan character it is plainly one of the most notable of the world's historical compositions. It yields to the great work of Gibbon, but it would be hard to name any other history in English that is its superior in what is after all the essential point, the art of narration. Macaulay claimed that his favorite Addison might have written a great novel, but the claim might better be made for Macaulay himself, since he was a born story teller. Unkind critics have intimated that he drew upon his imagination for his characters, and the public has always confessed that the *History* is as interesting as a novel. We shall not, however, go so far as to maintain that the *History* is a novel or that Lord Macaulay was a great novelist spoiled; but we are at liberty to contend that the great secret of the historian's success lay in his comprehension of the fact that to make the past really live it must be treated in much the same way in which a novelist would treat the materials gathered for his story.

Perhaps enough has been said about our author's scanty poetry, which appeals chiefly through its swing and vigor, but the *Essays* will naturally demand somewhat fuller treatment. Their main value lies probably in the stimulation they give to the intellectual powers of any reader who

has a spark of literary appreciation or the slightest desire to learn. Macaulay's erudition is so great and he wears it so lightly that one is instinctively led to wish for a similar mental equipment, and to fancy that it cannot be very difficult of attainment. Whatever Macaulay likes is described in such alluring terms that a reader feels that it would really be too bad for him not to know more about it. The truth of this statement is amusingly illustrated by an anecdote, given in the *Life and Letters*, of a gentleman who after reading the review of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* sent a servant after the book. Macaulay was sitting near him in the library of the Athenæum Club and enjoyed the incident. But, besides their alluring style and their power of mental stimulation, the *Essays* have the advantage of treating in the main great subjects that people wish to know about, and treating them in such a way as to impart a large amount of compact and very useful information. Perhaps this is the chief reason why men who are self-educated are so familiar with Macaulay. Such readers care very little for the nicer shadings of criticism, but they do care a great deal to have available information and positive opinions furnished them on the great men and events of the past. Hence Macaulay's essay on Bacon will survive the monumental answer that Mr. Spedding gave it; hence his essays on Clive and Warren Hastings will for generations supply the public with all the Indian history it is likely to demand.

After the *Milton* Macaulay wrote about forty essays, all of which appeared in the *Edinburgh* except the five contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. They fall into two main classes, literary and historical, with a few of miscellaneous character, such as that on Sadler's *Law of Population*. It is a striking proof of Macaulay's genius that they are nearly all as well worth reading to-day as they were when they appeared between the yellow and blue covers. As a rule a review is unreadable a few years after its appearance, as is proved by the dust that settles upon the volumes of such contemporaries of Macaulay's as Mack-

intosh and Talfourd. Their reviews were duly collected into volumes and they were included with Macaulay among the "British Essayists," but they are dead while Macaulay lives. The quarterlies are still published, and their ponderous reviews are read by leisurely people, and immediately forgotten, for there is no form of literature that has less vitality. Yet Macaulay's reviews are still read by thousands and keep alive the names of books and men that would else have long since perished. It is a remarkable literary phenomenon. While Macaulay did not originate the discursive literary review, he first gave it life and popularity, and may be compared to a trunk that puts forth many branches. But the branches are all dead or dying, while the trunk seems to be endowed with perpetual life and vigor. Explain it as we may, the fact remains that the essays on Clive and Pitt and Warren Hastings, on Milton and Addison and Johnson, on Barère and Mr. Robert Montgomery's Poems, although belonging by nature to the most ephemeral category of literature, are as fully entitled to be called classics as any compositions written in the English language during the present century.

Four of the best of these classical essays are included in this Series, and a careful study of them with the aid of the introductions and notes will initiate the student into much of the secret of Macaulay's power and charm. He should not, however, rest content with them, but should read at least most of the *Essays* and the poems, and should then go on to complete the five volumes of the *History*. Even then he will not have all of Macaulay, for the two delightful volumes of the *Life and Letters*, edited by Mr. Trevelyan, will remain to be enjoyed. Mr. Cotter Morison's excellent biography in the *English Men of Letters* will also be found worth perusing, and if a good analysis of the style of the great essayist be wanted, it can be had in a chapter of Professor Minto's well known *Manual of English Prose Literature*.

It is, of course, always desirable that even young students should know the most authoritative biographies of the authors they are studying, yet it is hardly practicable to ask them to read the whole of the two volumes of Trevelyan's *Life and Letters of Macaulay*. The following suggestions, however, may assist them in dipping into the great work at points where they cannot fail to be interested.

Volume I, chapter I, presents an amusing collection of anecdotes of Macaulay's childhood and early school days; chapter II offers interesting reminiscences of his university life; chapter III discusses the success of his earliest writings and gives vivid glimpses of his appearance, character, and manners of life at that period. Chapter IV begins the review of Macaulay's political career and recounts with some spirit the reception of his Reform speeches; a glimpse of Macaulay at home may be gained through the journal for 1831 and 1832 largely quoted in this chapter. Chapter VI prints some of his vivid descriptions of his life and work in India. The Appendix to Volume I contains his pencil notes scribbled in his Latin and Greek books, which furnish the whole clue to the riddle of the breadth and depth of Macaulay's reading.

Volume II, chapter VII, contains some readable letters written during his travels through Italy, 1838–1839. Macaulay's aptitude for the business of politics and his love of "being in the fight" are strongly presented in chapter VIII. In chapter IX we catch a glimpse of his literary workmanship in the account of his writing of *The Lays;* of his frank manner of criticising his contemporaries in literature; of his manner as an orator. Chapter X contains a lively description of Macaulay's political defeat in 1847, and prints in full the praiseworthy poem occasioned by this incident. The best discussion of his personality — his conversation, his memory, his dislike of society, his love for children, his zeal in collecting literary material and his methodical industry in writing — appears in chapter XI. In chapter

XIII is an interesting extract from a London journal which gives the current opinion of Macaulay's powers as a Parliamentary orator in 1853; there appear also some of the finest passages from his famous speech upon the second reading of the India Bill, and an account of the reception of the third and fourth volumes of his *History of England.* Chapter XIV recounts some laughable incidents of impositions upon Macaulay's well-known and credulous generosity; here also is the account of his being made a peer and of his inauguration as High Steward of the borough of Cambridge. In chapter XV are some amusing accounts of his tour through the Highlands, and a sympathetic description of his last days.

MACAULAY'S STYLE.

THE characteristics of Macaulay's style are so aggressively obvious that the student hardly needs to have them pointed out to him. Still, the following outline may be of some assistance in making an orderly examination of the essay in hand. It will be of value, however, only as the student will search out and arrange for himself, from the text, illustrations of all the qualities which are noted. A much more detailed criticism will be found in J. Scott Clark's *Study of English Prose Writers;* and a minute exposition of the rhetorical qualities of Macaulay's prose may be seen in William Minto's *Manual of English Prose Literature.*

I. RAPIDITY; ABUNDANCE; ERUDITION.

These qualities strike the reader before he has finished the first page. The abundance of Macaulay's thought and ideas, his equipment of facts, his historical, biographical, and literary knowledge, all move along together with the irresistible momentum acquired by an great mass once projected into motion. And as it rushes

along it gathers up this fact, that date, this bit of gossip, that stray allusion, — like a great snowball that rolls up everything in its path. Examination will prove that Macaulay's memory is accurate, and he never needs to consult reference books. Irving tells us that in his debates with Hallam, Macaulay would quote chapters and sections as if he had a whole library of books before him. He seemed to forget nothing he had ever read, and he read everything, great or insignificant. "His style was like a full-blooded steed on the race-course, fleet, direct, and of simple but splendid proportions." *Leslie Stephen.*

II. CLEARNESS; REPETITION.

These two qualities apparently arise from Macaulay s consciousness of and consideration for his reader. He seems to take special pains to be intelligible. He repeats an idea over and over again, and patiently makes those connections and explanations which galled Carlyle. This habit, which sometimes becomes tiresome, has led many critics to speak of Macaulay as "the purveyor of knowledge to the middle class," "a short cut to learning," and the "bourgeois writer." Once, after a series of meetings in which his *History of England* had been read aloud, one of the members rose and moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Macaulay for having written a history which working-men could understand.

"It seems as if he were making a wager with his reader, and saying to him, 'Be as absent in mind as you will, as stupid, as ignorant; in vain you will be ignorant; you shall learn, for I will repeat the idea in so many forms.'" *Taine.*

III. Genius for narrative; for portraiture; for the picturesque.

The *Essay on Johnson* is a single story from beginning to end, told by a true story-teller, who moves straight ahead, knows how to select what is worth telling, how to add color here and emphasis there, and how to accelerate his movement to a climax at just the right points. Particularly he loves to sketch a portrait, and he can do it so that we know the man in an instant. He gives us the details of his dress, the tricks of his manner, the peculiarities of his face or figure, the sound of his voice, the tread of his footstep. Nothing illustrates this power so well as the description of Johnson's personal appearance in the essay on *Boswell's Johnson.* Whatever was picturesque attracted Macaulay strongly; and to whatever was dull or colorless he would, if he needed it, give a color and life all his own.

"The first and most obvious secret of Macaulay's place on popular book shelves is that he has a true genius for narration. . . . His firmness and directness of statement, his spiritedness, his art of selecting salient and highly colored detail . . . keep the listener's attention and make him the easiest of writers to follow." *Morley.*

"He tells what people said, what they did, how they looked, what visions passed through their imaginations, and leaves the particulars of their state of feeling to be inferred from these material indications. Carlyle represents Johnson 'with his great greedy heart and unspeakable chaos of thoughts; stalking mournful on this earth, eagerly devouring what spiritual thing he could come at.' Macaulay represents him with more of concrete circumstances: 'ransacking his father's shelves,' 'devouring hundreds of pages,' 'treating the academical authorities with gross disrespect,' standing 'under

the gate of Pembroke, haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and dirty linen, his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendency.'" *Minto.*

IV. SACRIFICE OF ACCURACY TO FORM AND EFFECT.

So great is Macaulay's love of broad, sweeping statement, and of keeping up a contrast or a likeness, that he often, to gain his ends, must sacrifice a bit of the truth. He likes to draw things with bold, sharp outlines; the delicate shadings and fine-drawn distinctions which accuracy demands he has no aptitude for. "In his judgments all men are either black or white." This means, of course, extreme exaggeration for the sake of capturing an effect.

"In seeking for paradoxes he often stumbles on, but more frequently stumbles over the truth." *Gilfillan.*

V. LOVE OF ANTITHESIS; OF CLIMAX; OF IMAGERY.

Macaulay's determination to arouse the attention of his readers leads him to use profusely those forms of expression which stimulate and surprise. He is continually balancing words, phrases, sentences; he is always leading us to expect a certain state of affairs and then turning us with a "but" to a result quite different; he is ready at any moment with an epigram. Every sentence throbs with emphasis, and the emphasis always falls in the right place without use of printer's devices. A favorite form of emphasis with him is the climax. His paragraphs are as periodic as his sentences; we leave the climax at the end of one only to gather for a fresh start in the next. Figures of speech, especially in the earlier essays, are frequent and bold; some critics hold many of them tawdry and commonplace, but all are vigorous and original.

"His words overflow with antithetical forms of ex-

pression and thoughts condensed into sparkling epigrams. His page is brightened by them, gleaming over the discussion of a question of taste like incessant flashes of heat lightning — thrown off like glittering sparks in the rush of his declamatory logic." *Whipple.*

"From another pen such masses of ornament would be tawdry; with him they are only rich. . . . He embellishes the barrenest subject." *Gladstone.*

VI. SELF-CONFIDENCE; PREJUDICE; INVECTIVE.

Macaulay's self-assurance has gained him the reputation of being "cock-sure" about all matters which he discusses. He never hesitates to pass a judgment upon any one or any thing. These judgments are often partisan, for he seldom digs deeply enough into his subject to root up all his own prejudices. His politics colored everything he wrote. As Shirly says, "Lord Macaulay was a great man, but he was a great Whig man." And yet there was a sort of boyish honesty about his prejudices which is forgivable. The most unforgivable thing about them is that they too often lead him into bitter invective, and to the use of words and expressions which are mean in themselves.

"It is overweeningness and self-confident will that are the chief notes of Macaulay's style." *Morley.*

"His was a partiality for some characters amounting to favoritism; a hatred for others amounting to fury." *Gilfillan.*

"When he hates a man he calls him knave or fool with unflinching frankness." *Leslie Stephen.*

VII. DRAWBACKS OF HIS BRILLIANCY.

Macaulay's brilliancy and power made of him too hurried a thinker. He took but little time to weigh and analyze and search into the hidden aspects of his sub-

jects. His mind was so active and energetic that it abhorred rest or delay.

"Compare him with a calm, meditative, original writer like De Quincey, and you become vividly aware of his peculiar deficiency, as well as his peculiar strength; you find a more rapid succession of ideas and greater wealth of illustration, but you miss the subtle casuistry, the exact and finished similitudes, and the breaking up of routine views. No original opinion requiring patient consideration or delicate analysis is associated with the name of Macaulay. It better suited his stirring and excitable nature to apply his dazzling powers of expression and illustration to the opinions of others." *Minto.*

THE STRUCTURE AND FORM OF THE ESSAY ON JOHNSON.

THE *Essay on Johnson* follows its theme, the life and works of Samuel Johnson, with the directness of a straightforward narrative which never once loses sight of its main character, and follows only one single thread of interest. Compared with the *Essay on Milton*, the simplicity of its structure, its almost total lack of deliberate, conscious arrangement, becomes at once apparent. It lacks the formal introduction, the elaborate conclusion, and the careful proportioning and massing of parts which that earlier essay of Macaulay's shows. Here a different treatment was demanded, it is true, for the essay was written as a biographical sketch for the Encyclopedia Britannica; but in part its directness must be laid to the precision and strength which had come to its writer through years of experience. It is the simple order of actual events that determines Macaulay's arrangement of the *Essay on Johnson;* and his knowledge of the eighteenth century and his honest conviction that Johnson

was its great central figure keeps its subject dominant over all related subjects with a supremacy that makes for the simplest and clearest form of unity. In general the essay may be said to be based upon the following fundamental topics: —

I. Johnson's Early Life, ¶ 1–8.
II. Johnson's Early Struggles in London, ¶ 9–13.
III. Johnson's Early Literary Work, ¶ 14–22.
IV. The Period of Success, ¶ 23–33.
V. The Period of Decline, ¶ 34–49.
VI. Last Years and Death, ¶ 50, 51.
VII. Assured Position of Johnson, ¶ 52 (conclusion).

A glance shows, then, that the essay lacks a formal introduction, that its discussion proceeds upon the simple order of time, that its divisions are natural divisions of Johnson's life, that its unity is firm, that it presents a brief, plain conclusion. These main topics, however, are supported by related topics, varying in importance, and treated with different degrees of length, emphasis, and elaboration. It is a valuable exercise, and a simple and practical one, to make out the lists of these supporting topics and so complete the brief, as it were, of the whole essay. Then is one convincingly impressed with the firmness and directness of Macaulay's plan, and enabled to see what topics, full of interest to him, aroused him to his most brilliant style. Almost unconsciously in this way one grasps the form of each paragraph, — its unity, its climax, its manner of developing its central idea, and gets a bird's-eye view of the variety of paragraph form and length as controlled by the variety of matter under discussion.

For a further examination of Macaulay's paragraphs, sentences, words, and figures of speech one can do no better than to base his study, point by point, upon Professor Minto's discussion of Macaulay's style in his *Manual of English Prose Literature.*

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For a study of Macaulay's life and literary work the following books and essays are recommended: —

Biographical: —

Trevelyan, G. O. *Life and Letters of Macaulay.*
Morrison, J. C. *Macaulay* (English Men of Letters).
Stephen, Leslie. *Macaulay* (Dictionary of National Biography).

Critical: —

Minto, W. *English Prose Literature.*
Stephen, Leslie. *Hours in a Library.*
Bayne, P. *Essays in Biography and Criticism.*
Bagehot, W. *Literary Studies.*
Saintsbury, G. *Impressions.*
Henley, W. E. *Views and Reviews.*
Morley, John. *Miscellanies.*
Oliphant, Mrs. *Victorian Age of English Literature.*
Whipple, E. P. *Essays and Reviews.*
Nicoll, H. J. *Landmarks of English Literature.*
Gilfillan, G. *Literary Portraits.*

For a further study of Johnson the following are convenient books of reference: —

Stephen, Leslie. *Samuel Johnson* (English Men of Letters).
Grant, F. *Samuel Johnson* (Great Writers Series).
Seccombe, T. *The Age of Johnson.*
Madame Piozzi. *Anecdotes of Dr. Samuel Johnson.*
Birrell, A. *Samuel Johnson*, in *Obiter Dicta.*
Landor, W. S. *Imaginary Conversation between Samuel Johnson and John Horne Tooke.*

Carlyle, T. Essay on *Boswell's Life of Johnson* (a reply to Macaulay's essay).

Hill, G. Birkbeck. *Dr. Johnson, his Friends and his Critics.*

Stephen, Leslie. *Boswell* (Dictionary of National Biography).

The Johnson Club Papers. (The Johnson Club was formed December 13, 1884, at the "Cock" Tavern, Fleet Street, London, on the one hundredth anniversary of Johnson's death. Meetings of the club were held four times a year at the "Cock," or perhaps at Pembroke or Lichfield, and at these were read the papers here collected, — all devoted to matters of interest connected with Johnson.)

For students' use, Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill's edition of *Boswell's Life of Johnson* gives the fullest information and comments, but probably Napier's edition will be found quite as convenient for reference.

The following books give interesting data concerning places in London associated with Johnson's name: —

Hutton, L. *Literary Landmarks of London.*

Wheatley and Cunningham. *London, Past and Present.*

Lemon, M. *Up and Down the London Streets.*

Hare, A. *Walks in London.*

Besant, W. *London.*

Johnson's own writings may be consulted in the following:

The Vanity of Human Wishes, and *London*, in Hale's *Longer English Poems.*

Rasselas, edited by Professor F. W. Scott; or by Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill; or by O. F. Emerson.

Essays from *The Rambler* and *The Idler*, in Dr. G. Birkbeck Hill's *Select Essays of Samuel Johnson.*

Lives of the Poets, in *Six of the Lives of the Poets*, edited by Matthew Arnold.

Prayers and Meditations, composed by Samuel Johnson, collected by George Strahan. Lately reprinted in New York.

A Dictionary of the English Language, by Samuel Johnson: a copy of the early editions, either the folio or the "Abstracted edition by the author," will furnish the student with all the amusement which Macaulay bespeaks for the hour spent in turning over its pages.

The Complete Works of Johnson may be found in any good library. The best edition is that of 1825, which is so excellent that, with the exception of an édition-de-luxe, no new edition has been called for since. The most scholarly edition of *The Lives of the Poets* is that by G. Birkbeck Hill (3 vols.); he has also edited Johnson's *Letters*, *Johnson Miscellanies* (2 vols.), and *Boswell's Life of Johnson.*

PREFATORY NOTE.

The Essay on Johnson, like those on Goldsmith and Bunyan, first appeared in the eighth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and is still to be found there. The editors of the new edition were wise in retaining what is not only in all probability the best of Macaulay's essays, but also one of the finest biographical sketches in any language. The praise which Macaulay gave perhaps too generously to Johnson's *Life of Richard Savage* should really be reserved for his own masterly account of the great Doctor's life and writings. One might almost bestow upon it the praise he gave to Boswell's *Life*, if compositions of essentially different kinds could be profitably compared. The secret of Macaulay's success is not far to seek, however much one may despair of equalling his performance. He knew his subject thoroughly and sympathized with him, and, as Matthew Arnold said, was for the nineteenth very much the sort of man that Dr. Johnson was for the eighteenth century. In addition his limited space kept him from being too discursive, and his years of practice enabled him to give to his style a precision and strength and pliability that, in the *Essays* at least, it had not hitherto attained. Both in substance and in form, then, this miniature biography, for such it is, represents Macaulay at his very best. It is needless to say more of it and it is equally needless to discuss Dr. Johnson when Macaulay has practically said the last word about him. Industrious editors like Dr. Birkbeck Hill will continue to annotate Boswell and to bring small facts to light, but if they are wise they will not obscure the full-sized portrait that the inquisitive little Scotchman painted. Criticism of Johnson's works and an endeavor to give them greater currency is, of course, another matter, and such volumes as Matthew Arnold's selected *Lives of the Poets* may be thoroughly recommended. Complete editions of Johnson's works are not often published, but copies of existing editions are easily obtained, and *Rasselas*, at least, is to be had in almost any form.

The latest modern lives are by Mr. Leslie Stephen in the *English Men of Letters* and by Colonel Grant in the *Great Writers*. For a more explicit study of points in the essay, the reader will find Woodrow Wilson's *The State*, Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, Gosse's *History of English Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, and Lord Mahon's *History of England under Queen Anne* convenient books of reference.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, one of the most eminent English writers of the eighteenth century, was the son of Michael Johnson, who was, at the beginning of that century, a magistrate of Lichfield, and a bookseller of great note in the midland counties. Michael's abilities and attainments seem to have been considerable. He was so well acquainted with the contents of the volumes which he exposed to sale, that the country rectors[1] of Staffordshire and Worcestershire thought him an oracle on points of learning. Between him and the clergy, indeed, there was a strong religious and political sympathy. He was a zealous churchman, and, though he had qualified himself for municipal office by taking the oaths to the sovereigns in possession, was to the last a Jacobite in heart. At his house, a house which is still pointed out to every traveller who visits Lichfield, Samuel was born on the 18th of September, 1709. In the child, the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterwards distinguished the man were plainly discernible, — great muscular strength accompanied by much awkwardness and many infirmities; great quickness of parts,[2] with a morbid propensity to sloth and procras-

[1] Country rectors were often marvellously ignorant in those days and earlier. See in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* the character of Parson Trulliber.

[2] That is, of mental endowments.

tination; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper. He had inherited from his ancestors a scrofulous taint, which it was beyond the power of medicine to remove. His parents were weak enough to believe that the royal touch was a specific for this malady. In his third year he was taken up to London, inspected by the court surgeon, prayed over by the court chaplains, and stroked and presented with a piece of gold by Queen Anne. One of his earliest recollections was that of a stately lady in a diamond stomacher and a long black hood. Her hand was applied in vain. The boy's features, which were originally noble and not irregular, were distorted by his malady. His cheeks were deeply scarred. He lost for a time the sight of one eye, and he saw but very imperfectly with the other. But the force of his mind overcame every impediment. Indolent as he was, he acquired knowledge with such ease and rapidity that at every school to which he was sent he was soon the best scholar. From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices. He learned much at this time, though his studies were without guidance and without plan. He ransacked his father's shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting and passed over what was dull. An ordinary lad would have acquired little or no useful knowledge in such a way, but much that was dull to ordinary lads was interesting to Samuel. He read little Greek, for his proficiency in that language was not such that he could take much pleasure in the masters of Attic poetry and eloquence. But he had left school a good Latinist, and he soon acquired, in the large and miscellaneous library of which he now had the command,

an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. That Augustan delicacy of taste which is the boast of the great public schools [1] of England he never possessed. But he was early familiar with some classical writers who were quite unknown to the best scholars in the sixth form at Eton. He was peculiarly attracted by the works of the great restorers of learning.[2] Once, while searching for some apples, he found a huge folio volume of Petrarch's works. The name excited his curiosity, and he eagerly devoured hundreds of pages. Indeed, the diction and versification of his own Latin compositions show that he had paid at least as much attention to modern copies from the antique as to the original models.

While he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore upon books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university,[3] but a wealthy neighbor offered assistance, and, in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College, Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of

[1] That is, schools like Rugby, Eton, and Harrow, which are not "public" in the American sense, but are supported by endowments and fees.

[2] That is, the leaders of the Renaissance, Petrarch, Erasmus, Sir Thomas More, Colet, etc.

[3] There were only two universities then in England, Oxford and Cambridge, and in popular opinion there are only two now, though London, Durham, and Victoria have been added within the present century.

that society,[1] they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory but not unprofitable study. On the first day of his residence, he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius;[2] and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments.

At Oxford, Johnson resided during about three years. He was poor, even to raggedness; and his appearance excited a mirth and a pity which were equally intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was driven from the quadrangle of Christ Church by the sneering looks which the members of that aristocratical society cast at the holes in his shoes. Some charitable person placed a new pair at his door, but he spurned them away in a fury. Distress made him, not servile, but reckless and ungovernable. No opulent gentleman commoner,[3] panting for one and twenty, could have treated the academical authorities with more gross disrespect. The needy scholar was generally to be seen under the gate of Pembroke, a gate now adorned with his effigy,[4] haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and

[1] An English college is an endowed and incorporated association of students. Its rulers are the Master (or Warden, etc.) and the fellows.

[2] Died 415 A. D., author of a miscellaneous collection of antiquarian and critical pieces entitled *Saturnalia*, but best known for his commentary on the famous *Scipio's Dream* of Cicero.

[3] One paying all charges and not dependent on the college funds for support.

[4] Pembroke (founded 1624) has had many other distinguished sons — *e. g.* Shenstone, Blackstone, and Whitefield.

dirty linen, his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendency. In every mutiny against the discipline of the college, he was the ringleader. Much was pardoned, however, to a youth so highly distinguished by abilities and acquirements. He had early made himself known by turning Pope's "Messiah"[1] into Latin verse. The style and rhythm, indeed, were not exactly Virgilian; but the translation found many admirers, and was read with pleasure by Pope himself.

The time drew near at which Johnson would, in the ordinary course of things, have become a bachelor of arts; but he was at the end of his resources. Those promises of support on which he had relied had not been kept. His family could do nothing for him. His debts to Oxford tradesmen were small indeed, yet larger than he could pay. In the autumn of 1731 he was under the necessity of quitting the university without a degree. In the following winter his father died. The old man left but a pittance, and of that pittance almost the whole was appropriated to the support of his widow. The property to which Samuel succeeded amounted to no more than twenty pounds.

His life during the thirty years which followed was one hard struggle with poverty. The misery of that struggle needed no aggravation, but was aggravated by the sufferings of an unsound body and an unsound mind. Before the young man left the uni-

[1] This poem, first published in *The Spectator* for May 14, 1712, was in imitation of Virgil's *Pollio* (*Eclogue* IV.), and is one of the best of Pope's early works. The concluding lines have furnished us with one of the most familiar of modern hymns: —

"Rise, crowned with light, imperial Salem, rise!"

versity, his hereditary malady had broken forth in a singularly cruel form. He had become an incurable hypochondriac. He said long after that he had been mad all his life, or at least not perfectly sane; and, in truth, eccentricities less strange than his have often been thought grounds sufficient for absolving felons and for setting aside wills. His grimaces, his gestures, his mutterings, sometimes diverted and sometimes terrified people who did not know him. At a dinner table he would, in a fit of absence, stoop down and twitch off a lady's shoe. He would amaze a drawing-room by suddenly ejaculating a clause of the Lord's Prayer. He would conceive an unintelligible aversion to a particular alley, and perform a great circuit rather than see the hateful place. He would set his heart on touching every post in the streets through which he walked. If by any chance he missed a post, he would go back a hundred yards and repair the omission. Under the influence of his disease, his senses became morbidly torpid and his imagination morbidly active. At one time he would stand poring on the town clock without being able to tell the hour. At another he would distinctly hear his mother, who was many miles off, calling him by his name. But this was not the worst. A deep melancholy took possession of him, and gave a dark tinge to all his views of human nature and of human destiny. Such wretchedness as he endured has driven many men to shoot themselves or drown themselves. But he was under no temptation to commit suicide. He was sick of life, but he was afraid of death; and he shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour. In religion he found but little comfort during his long and frequent fits of

dejection, for his religion partook of his own character. The light from heaven shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its own pure splendor. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium: they reached him refracted, dulled, and discolored by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul; and, though they might be sufficiently clear to guide him, were too dim to cheer him.

With such infirmities of body and of mind, this celebrated man was left, at two and twenty, to fight his way through the world. He remained during about five years in the midland counties. At Lichfield, his birthplace and his early home, he had inherited some friends and acquired others. He was kindly noticed by Henry Hervey,[1] a gay officer of noble family, who happened to be quartered there. Gilbert Walmesley,[2] registrar of the ecclesiastical court of the diocese, — a man of distinguished parts, learning, and knowledge of the world, — did himself honor by patronizing the young adventurer, whose repulsive person, unpolished manners, and squalid garb moved many of the petty aristocracy of the neighborhood to laughter or to disgust. At Lichfield, however, Johnson could find no way of earning a livelihood. He became usher of a grammar school[3] in Leicestershire; he resided as a humble companion in the house of a country gentleman;[4] but a life of

[1] Born in 1700; brother of Lord John Hervey.

[2] (1680–1751). At the end of his *Life* of the poet Edmund Smith, Johnson paid a noble tribute to this early friend.

[3] That is, assistant master in a school in which Latin and Greek were the chief studies. The school was that of Market Bosworth. He became usher in July, 1732.

[4] Sir Wolstan Dixie, patron of the school.

dependence was insupportable to his haughty spirit. He repaired to Birmingham, and there earned a few guineas by literary drudgery. In that town he printed a translation, little noticed at the time and long forgotten, of a Latin book about Abyssinia.[1] He then put forth proposals for publishing by subscription the poems of Politian,[2] with notes containing a history of modern Latin verse; but subscriptions did not come in, and the volume never appeared.

While leading this vagrant and miserable life, Johnson fell in love. The object of his passion was Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a widow who had children as old as himself. To ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colors, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels.[3] To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish ceruse from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Tetty, as he called her, was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration was unfeigned cannot be doubted, for she was as poor as himself. She accepted, with a readiness which did her little honor, the addresses of a

[1] This was not a Latin book, but a French translation of a work by Lobo (1593–1678), a Portuguese Jesuit.

[2] Politian (Angelo Ambrogini, 1454–1494) was one of the most brilliant scholars and teachers of the Renaissance. He not only succeeded in Latin verse, but was also an able Italian poet.

[3] Mary Lepel (1700–1768), who married Lord John Hervey, author of the *Memoirs of the Court of George II.*, and Catherine Hyde (died 1777), afterwards Duchess of Queensberry, were noted beauties of the period, and friends of Pope and Gay.

suitor who might have been her son. The marriage, however, in spite of occasional wranglings, proved happier than might have been expected. The lover continued to be under the illusions of the wedding day till the lady died, in her sixty-fourth year. On her monument he placed an inscription extolling the charms of her person and of her manners; and when, long after her decease, he had occasion to mention her, he exclaimed, with a tenderness half ludicrous, half pathetic, "Pretty creature!"

His marriage made it necessary for him to exert himself more strenuously than he had hitherto done.[1] He took a house in the neighborhood of his native town, and advertised for pupils.[2] But eighteen months passed away, and only three pupils came to his academy. Indeed, his appearance was so strange, and his temper so violent, that his schoolroom must have resembled an ogre's den. Nor was the tawdry, painted grandmother whom he called his Titty well qualified to make provision for the comfort of young gentlemen. David Garrick,[3] who was one of the pupils, used many years later to throw the best company of London into convulsions of laughter by mimicking the endearments of this extraordinary pair.

At length Johnson, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, determined to seek his fortune in the capital as a literary adventurer. He set out with a few

[1] The marriage was performed July 9, 1735, at Derby, though Mrs. Porter lived at Birmingham, to which place Johnson had returned.

[2] In 1736.

[3] The great actor (1716–1779), from whom many of the unpleasing details about Mrs. Porter were, as Macaulay intimates, obtained by Boswell.

guineas, three acts of the tragedy of "Irene" in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction from his friend Walmesley.

Never since literature became a calling in England had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation,[1] a writer of eminent merit was sure to be munificently rewarded by the government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place; and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a member of Parliament, a lord of the treasury, an ambassador, a secretary of state.[2] It would be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers[3] of the nineteenth century, of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the booksellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of prosperity. Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing of equality with nobles and ministers of state. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular — such an author as Thomson,[4] whose "Seasons"

[1] That is, the reigns of William III. and Anne. See the essay on Addison.

[2] With regard to literary men who rose in politics, the student should remember that Steele was a member of Parliament, Prior an ambassador, and Addison a secretary of state.

[3] For example, Scott, Byron, Macaulay.

[4] For James Thomson, the poet (1700–1748) and Henry Fielding (1707–1754), the great novelist, see Gosse. Fielding's early

were in every library; such an author as Fielding, whose "Pasquin" had had a greater run than any drama since the "Beggar's Opera"[1] — was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment measured with a scornful eye that athletic though uncouth frame, and exclaimed, "You had better get a porter's knot[2] and carry trunks." Nor was the advice bad, for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed and as comfortably lodged as a poet.

Some time appears to have elapsed before Johnson was able to form any literary connection from which he could expect more than bread for the day which was passing over him. He never forgot the generosity with which Hervey, who was now residing in London, relieved his wants during this time of trial. "Harry Hervey," said the old philosopher many years later, "was a vicious man, but he was very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey, I shall love him." At Hervey's table, Johnson sometimes enjoyed

work was as a dramatist, but none of his plays, including the satiric comedy mentioned, is read to-day, except possibly his *Tragedy of Tragedies*, a parody which celebrates Tom Thumb.

[1] A famous parody on the Italian opera, written by John Gay (1685–1732) on a hint from Swift. It was produced in 1728, and had an immense run, its chief characters representing highwaymen and pickpockets. For Gay, whose *Fables* and *Black-eyed Susan* are still read, and who was a delightful man, see Gosse.

[2] A pad worn on the head.

feasts which were made more agreeable by contrast. But in general he dined, and thought that he dined well, on sixpennyworth of meat and a pennyworth of bread at an alehouse near Drury Lane.[1]

The effect of the privations and sufferings which he endured at this time was discernible to the last in his temper and his deportment. His manners had never been courtly. They now became almost savage. Being frequently under the necessity of wearing shabby coats and dirty shirts, he became a confirmed sloven. Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at the tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey. His taste in cookery, formed in subterranean ordinaries[2] and *alamode* beefshops,[3] was far from delicate. Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself with such violence that his veins swelled and the moisture broke out on his forehead. The affronts which his poverty emboldened stupid and low-minded men to offer to him, would have broken a mean spirit into sycophancy, but made him rude even to ferocity. Unhappily, the insolence which, while it was defensive, was pardonable and in some sense respect-

[1] A famous street (not then or now aristocratic) in the heart of London. The student may consult books by Hare, Loftie, and Sir Walter Besant, in order to learn something about historic London.

[2] Eating houses, where a fixed rate is charged for meals.

[3] Where beef *à la mode* (*i. e.*, larded with spices, vegetables, wine, etc.) was sold.

able, accompanied him into societies where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was repeatedly provoked into striking those who had taken liberties with him. All the sufferers, however, were wise enough to abstain from talking about their beatings, except Osborne, the most rapacious and brutal of booksellers, who proclaimed everywhere that he had been knocked down by the huge fellow whom he had hired to puff the Harleian Library.[1]

About a year after Johnson had begun to reside in London, he was fortunate enough to obtain regular employment from Cave,[2] an enterprising and intelligent bookseller, who was proprietor and editor of "The Gentleman's Magazine." That journal, just entering on the ninth year of its long existence, was the only periodical work in the kingdom which then had what would now be called a large circulation. It was, indeed, the chief source of parliamentary intelligence. It was not then safe, even during a recess, to publish an account of the proceedings of either House without some disguise. Cave, however, ventured to entertain his readers with what he called "Reports of the Debates of the Senate of Lilliput."[3] France was Blefuscu; London was Mildendo; pounds were sprugs;

[1] A famous collection of books and manuscripts made by Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford (1661–1724), the rival of Marlborough and Godolphin, and bought by Osborne, who hired Dr. Johnson to assist in cataloguing it.

[2] Edward Cave (1691–1754), under the name of "Sylvanus Urban," founded, in 1731, *The Gentleman's Magazine* (which is still running, though changed in plan, and the back volumes of which are a mine of miscellaneous information). Johnson wrote a good Latin ode to him, and a short sketch of him.

[3] This and the following queer names are taken from *Gulliver's Travels*. For an account of how news was circulated at this period, and earlier, see Macaulay's *History*, chap. iii.

the Duke of Newcastle[1] was the Nardac secretary of state; Lord Hardwicke was the Hugo Hickrad; and William Pulteney was Wingul Pulnub. To write the speeches was, during several years, the business of Johnson. He was generally furnished with notes — meagre indeed and inaccurate — of what had been said; but sometimes he had to find argument and eloquence, both for the ministry and for the opposition. He was himself a Tory, not from rational conviction, — for his serious opinion was, that one form of government was just as good or as bad as another, — but from mere passion, such as inflamed the Capulets against the Montagues,[2] or the Blues of the Roman circus against the Greens.[3] In his infancy he had heard so much talk about the villanies of the Whigs and the dangers of the Church, that he had become a furious partisan when he could scarcely speak. Before he was three, he had insisted on being taken to hear Sacheverell[4] preach at Lichfield Cathedral,

[1] Thomas Pelham. For this fatuous statesman (1693–1768) see Macaulay's essays on Pitt and Chatham. Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke (1690–1764), was a famous Lord Chancellor. William Pulteney, Earl of Bath (1682?–1764), was a leader of a Whig faction against Walpole.

[2] See *Romeo and Juliet.*

[3] See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, chap. xl. The drivers in the Roman circus wore liveries, — white, red, green, and blue, — and the populace took sides according to colors. Many riots resulted, and the feuds were transferred to Constantinople, where the great Nika riots of 532 A. D. took place.

[4] The Rev. Dr. Henry Sacheverell (1672–1724) was a foolish High Churchman, who in 1709 preached two sermons of an intemperate character against the Whigs. He was impeached, tried by the Peers, and found guilty, with the natural result that he became a hero with the Tories, and had not a little to do with the Whig downfall.

and had listened to the sermon with as much respect, and probably with as much intelligence, as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation. The work which had been begun in the nursery had been completed by the university. Oxford, when Johnson resided there, was the most Jacobitical place in England; and Pembroke was one of the most Jacobitical colleges in Oxford. The prejudices which he brought up to London were scarcely less absurd than those of his own Tom Tempest.[1] Charles II. and James II. were two of the best kings that ever reigned. Laud, a poor creature who never did, said, or wrote anything indicating more than the ordinary capacity of an old woman, was a prodigy of parts and learning, over whose tomb Art and Genius[2] still continued to weep. Hampden[3] deserved no more honorable name than that of "the zealot of rebellion." Even the ship money, condemned not less decidedly by Falkland[4] and Clarendon[5] than by the bitterest Roundheads, Johnson would not pronounce to have been an unconstitutional impost. Under a government the mildest that had ever been known in the world, under a government which allowed to the people an unprecedented liberty of speech and action, he fancied that he was a slave; he assailed the ministry with obloquy

[1] See Johnson's *Idler*, No. 10.

[2] See *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, l. 173.

[3] John Hampden (1594–1643), the famous Puritan statesman, who resisted the ship-money tax, and was killed in a skirmish with the Royalists.

[4] Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland (1610?–1643), poet, scholar, and one of the noblest of Charles I.'s adherents. See Matthew Arnold's essay on him.

[5] The great Lord Chancellor and historian.

which refuted itself, and regretted the lost freedom and happiness of those golden days in which a writer who had taken but one tenth part of the license allowed to him would have been pilloried, mangled with the shears, whipped at the cart's tail,[1] and flung into a noisome dungeon to die. He hated dissenters and stockjobbers, the excise and the army, septennial parliaments, and continental connections.[2] He long had an aversion to the Scotch, — an aversion of which he could not remember the commencement, but which, he owned, had probably originated in his abhorrence of the conduct of the nation during the Great Rebellion. It is easy to guess in what manner debates on great party questions were likely to be reported by a man whose judgment was so much disordered by party spirit. A show of fairness was, indeed, necessary to the prosperity of the magazine. But Johnson long afterwards owned that, though he had saved appearances, he had taken care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it; and, in fact, every passage which has lived, every passage which bears the marks of his higher faculties, is put into the mouth of some member of the opposition.[3]

A few weeks after Johnson had entered on these obscure labors, he published a work which at once placed him high among the writers of his age. It is

[1] Obsolete methods of punishment.

[2] All objects of Tory invective. Dissenters, of course, were opposed to the church; stockjobbers to the landed interests; the excise was favored by Walpole; the army was due to William III.; limiting the duration of Parliament (to seven years) was a Whig measure; connections with foreign countries, especially with Holland, formed a part of Whig policy, — though Johnson would have done well to remember the Treaty of Dover.

[3] That is, the Tories, the party out of power.

probable that what he had suffered during his first year in London had often reminded him of some parts of that noble poem in which Juvenal[1] had described the misery and degradation of a needy man of letters, lodged among the pigeons' nests in the tottering garrets which overhung the streets of Rome. Pope's admirable imitations of Horace's "Satires" and "Epistles" had recently appeared, were in every hand, and were by many readers thought superior to the originals. What Pope had done for Horace, Johnson aspired to do for Juvenal. The enterprise was bold, and yet judicious. For between Johnson and Juvenal there was much in common,[2] — much more, certainly, than between Pope and Horace.

Johnson's "London" appeared without his name in May, 1738. He received only ten guineas for this stately and vigorous poem; but the sale was rapid and the success complete. A second edition was required within a week. Those small critics who are always desirous to lower established reputations ran about proclaiming that the anonymous satirist was superior to Pope in Pope's own peculiar department of literature. It ought to be remembered, to the honor of Pope, that he joined heartily in the applause with which the appearance of a rival genius was welcomed. He made inquiries about the author of "London." Such a man, he said, could not long be concealed. The name was soon discovered; and Pope, with great kindness, exerted himself to obtain an academical degree, and the mastership of a grammar

[1] Juvenal's third satire is meant. Dryden had translated it, along with four others, and Oldham had applied it to London as Boileau had done to Paris.

[2] For example, a certain severity of temper and morals.

school, for the poor young poet. The attempt failed, and Johnson remained a bookseller's hack.

It does not appear that these two men — the most eminent writer of the generation which was going out, and the most eminent writer of the generation which was coming in — ever saw each other. They lived in very different circles, — one surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and index-makers. Among Johnson's associates at this time may be mentioned Boyse,[1] who, when his shirts were pledged, scrawled Latin verses, sitting up in bed with his arms through two holes in his blankets, who composed very respectable sacred poetry when he was sober, and who was at last run over by a hackney coach when he was drunk; Hoole,[2] surnamed the metaphysical tailor, who, instead of attending to his measures, used to trace geometrical diagrams on the board where he sat cross-legged; and the penitent impostor, George Psalmanazar,[3] who, after poring all day, in a humble lodging, on the folios of Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers, indulged himself at night with literary and theological conversation at an alehouse in the city. But the most remarkable of the persons with whom at this time Johnson consorted was Richard Savage,[4] an

[1] Samuel Boyse (1708–1749).

[2] Uncle of John Hoole, the translator of Tasso and Ariosto, who was also a friend of Johnson.

[3] The famous impostor (1679 ?–1763), who pretended to be a native of Formosa, and wrote an account of that island which imposed on a great many people. He was born in France, but kept his real name concealed.

[4] (1698–1743), reputed to be the illegitimate son of the Countess of Macclesfield. He was a poet interesting rather as foreshadowing future tendencies of English verse than as writing

earl's son, a shoemaker's apprentice, who had seen life in all its forms, who had feasted among blue ribbands in St. James's Square,[1] and had lain with fifty pounds' weight of irons on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate.[2] This man had, after many vicissitudes of fortune, sunk at last into abject and hopeless poverty. His pen had failed him. His patrons had been taken away by death, or estranged by the riotous profusion with which he squandered their bounty, and the ungrateful insolence with which he rejected their advice. He now lived by begging. He dined on venison and champagne whenever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea. If his questing had been unsuccessful, he appeased the rage of hunger with some scraps of broken meat, and lay down to rest under the piazza of Covent Garden[3] in warm weather, and in cold weather as near as he could get to the furnace of a glasshouse.[4] Yet, in his misery, he was still an agreeable companion. He had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about that gay and brilliant world from which he was now an outcast. He had observed the great men of both parties in hours of careless relaxation, had seen the leaders of opposition without the mask of patriotism, and had heard the prime minister[5] roar with laughter and tell

anything worth the general reader's attention. But the student should by all means read Johnson's *Life* of him.

[1] That is, with Knights of the Garter, in one of the most aristocratic quarters of London.

[2] The noted prison.

[3] Originally "Convent" Garden, best known through its market and theatre.

[4] Sometimes a conservatory, though the word is here used for "glass-works."

[5] Sir Robert Walpole.

stories not over-decent. During some months, Savage lived in the closest familiarity with Johnson; and then the friends parted, not without tears. Johnson remained in London to drudge for Cave. Savage went to the west of England, lived there as he had lived everywhere, and in 1743 died, penniless and heart-broken, in Bristol jail.

Soon after his death, while the public curiosity was strongly excited about his extraordinary character and his not less extraordinary adventures, a life of him appeared, widely different from the catchpenny lives of eminent men which were then a staple article of manufacture in Grub Street.[1] The style was, indeed, deficient in ease and variety; and the writer was evidently too partial to the Latin element of our language. But the little work, with all its faults, was a masterpiece. No finer specimen of literary biography[2] existed in any language, living or dead; and a discerning critic might have confidently predicted that the author was destined to be the founder of a new school of English eloquence.

The Life of Savage was anonymous, but it was well known in literary circles that Johnson was the writer. During the three years which followed, he produced no important work; but he was not, and indeed could not be, idle. The fame of his abilities and learning continued to grow. Warburton[3] pro-

[1] A street "much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *grubstreet*." Johnson's *Dictionary*.

[2] Does this mean a biography considered as a piece of literature, or a biography of a literary person? If the former, the praise will seem extravagant to those who admire the *Agricola* of Tacitus.

[3] The famous William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester,

nounced him a man of parts and genius, and the praise of Warburton was then no light thing. Such was Johnson's reputation that in 1747 several eminent booksellers combined to employ him in the arduous work of preparing a "Dictionary of the English Language," in two folio volumes. The sum which they agreed to pay him was only fifteen hundred guineas, and out of this sum he had to pay several poor men of letters who assisted him in the humbler parts of his task.

The Prospectus of the Dictionary he addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield.[1] Chesterfield had long been celebrated for the politeness of his manners, the brilliancy of his wit, and the delicacy of his taste. He was acknowledged to be the finest speaker in the House of Lords. He had recently governed Ireland, at a momentous conjuncture,[2] with eminent firmness, wisdom, and humanity; and he had since become secretary of state. He received Johnson's homage with the most winning affability, and requited it with a few guineas, bestowed, doubtless, in a very graceful manner, but was by no means desirous to see all his carpets blackened with the London mud, and his

(1698–1779), a noted controversialist and dogmatic critic whose reputation, immense during his lifetime, has dwindled almost to nothing.

[1] The Earl of Chesterfield (Philip Dormer Stanhope, 1694–1773) is chiefly renowned as a man of fashion, and as the author of a series of *Letters* to his son which is still a classic manual of conduct. Johnson remarked of this famous book that it taught the morals of a courtesan and the manners of a dancing master. Chesterfield was an accomplished diplomat, and foresaw the coming of the French Revolution.

[2] As Lord Lieutenant about 1745. He kept down factions and bribery, and established schools and manufactories.

soups and wines thrown to right and left over the gowns of fine ladies and the waistcoats of fine gentlemen, by an absent, awkward scholar, who gave strange starts and uttered strange growls, — who dressed like a scarecrow and ate like a cormorant. During some time Johnson continued to call on his patron,[1] but, after being repeatedly told by the porter that his lordship was not at home, took the hint, and ceased to present himself at the inhospitable door.

Johnson had flattered himself that he should have completed his Dictionary by the end of 1750, but it was not till 1755 that he at length gave his huge volumes to the world. During the seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning definitions and marking quotations for transcription, he sought for relaxation in literary labor of a more agreeable kind. In 1749 he published "The Vanity of Human Wishes," an excellent imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. It is in truth not easy to say whether the palm belongs to the ancient or to the modern poet. The couplets[2] in which the fall of Wolsey is described, though lofty and sonorous, are feeble when compared with the wonderful lines which bring before us all

[1] Down to the time of Pope, and later, the patron, a nobleman or other distinguished personage who would pay for the honor of a dedication, was necessary to the author, and was celebrated with a flattery that seems loathsome to us now. Fortunately, the growth of a reading public has relieved authors from this shameful necessity, a consummation toward which the stand taken by Pope and Johnson led the way.

[2] Lines 99–128. The student will do well to compare with the Latin original (ll. 56–80), and with the famous passage in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII.* Both *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are given with useful annotation in Hales's *Longer English Poems.*

Rome in tumult on the day of the fall of Sejanus;[1] the laurels on the doorposts; the white bull stalking towards the Capitol; the statues rolling down from their pedestals; the flatterers of the disgraced minister running to see him dragged with a hook through the streets, and to have a kick at his carcass before it is hurled into the Tiber. It must be owned, too, that in the concluding passage the Christian moralist has not made the most of his advantages, and has fallen decidedly short of the sublimity of his Pagan model. On the other hand, Juvenal's Hannibal must yield to Johnson's Charles;[2] and Johnson's vigorous and pathetic enumeration of the miseries of a literary life[3] must be allowed to be superior to Juvenal's lamentation over the fate of Demosthenes and Cicero.

For the copyright of "The Vanity of Human Wishes" Johnson received only fifteen guineas.

A few days after the publication of this poem, his tragedy, begun many years before, was brought on the stage. His pupil, David Garrick, had in 1741 made his appearance on a humble stage in Goodman's Fields,[4] had at once risen to the first place among actors, and was now, after several years of almost uninterrupted success, manager of Drury Lane The-

[1] The infamous minister of the Emperor Tiberius, whose fate had previously given Ben Jonson the subject for a tragedy. See Capes's *Early Roman Empire* in the *Epochs* series. Macaulay is paraphrasing Juvenal.

[2] That is, the great Charles XII. of Sweden.

[3] "Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the gaol."
The Vanity of Human Wishes, l. 160.

Johnson's satires have furnished several familiar quotations, and are strong, though by no means great poems.

[4] Near the Tower.

atre.[1] The relation between him and his old preceptor was of a very singular kind. They repelled each other strongly, and yet attracted each other strongly. Nature had made them of very different clay, and circumstances had fully brought out the natural peculiarities of both. Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper. Johnson saw, with more envy than became so great a man, the villa, the plate, the china, the Brussels carpet, which the little mimic had got by repeating, with grimaces and gesticulations, what wiser men had written; and the exquisitely sensitive vanity of Garrick was galled by the thought that, while all the rest of the world was applauding him, he could obtain from one morose cynic, whose opinion it was impossible to despise, scarcely any compliment not acidulated with scorn. Yet the two Lichfield men had so many early recollections in common, and sympathized with each other on so many points on which they sympathized with nobody else in the vast population of the capital, that though the master was often provoked by the monkey-like impertinence of the pupil, and the pupil by the bearish rudeness of the master, they remained friends till they were parted by death. Garrick now brought "Irene" out, with alterations sufficient to displease the author, yet not sufficient to make the piece pleasing to the audience. The public, however, listened, with little emotion but with much civility, to five acts of monotonous declamation. After nine representations, the play was withdrawn. It is, indeed,

[1] Drury Lane Theatre was opened in 1674 with an address by Dryden. It has been several times rebuilt and is still used — chiefly for pantomimes.

altogether unsuited to the stage, and, even when perused in the closet, will be found hardly worthy of the author. He had not the slightest notion of what blank verse should be. A change in the last syllable of every other line would make the versification of "The Vanity of Human Wishes" closely resemble the versification of "Irene."[1] The poet, however, cleared by his benefit nights,[2] and by the sale of the copyright of his tragedy, about three hundred pounds, then a great sum in his estimation.[3]

About a year after the representation of "Irene," he began to publish a series of short essays on morals, manners, and literature. This species of composition had been brought into fashion by the success of "The Tatler," and by the still more brilliant success of "The Spectator."[4] A crowd of small writers had vainly attempted to rival Addison. "The Lay Mon-

[1] The subject of Johnson's tragedy is the passion of the Sultan Mahomet (the Great) for a beautiful Greek slave, Irene. Macaulay's criticism seems eminently just. The student need not be a master of the technicalities of blank verse in order to feel that Johnson could not write it; a feeling which will be strengthened by a perusal of the papers on Milton's versification contributed to *The Rambler*.

[2] The author seems to have received the profits of every third night's performance. See Boswell, who gives many interesting details about the performance. Johnson took his disappointment philosophically.

[3] Macaulay naturally has little more to say about Johnson as a poet. The Doctor's greatness did not lie that way, but his two satires, his elegy on Levet (see *post*), and one or two epitaphs and impromptus should be read by the serious student. Of the Latin poems the lines to Cave are excellent, and the version of Pope's *Messiah* is good.

[4] See the essay on Addison, also Gosse, and, better still, read selections from both papers, which originated in the fertile brain of Steele, but were made classical by Addison.

astery," "The Censor," "The Freethinker," "The Plain Dealer," "The Champion," [1] and other works of the same kind, had had their short day. None of them had obtained a permanent place in our literature; and they are now to be found only in the libraries of the curious. At length Johnson undertook the adventure in which so many aspirants had failed. In the thirty-sixth year after the appearance of the last number of "The Spectator," appeared the first number of "The Rambler." [2] From March, 1750, to March, 1752, this paper continued to come out every Tuesday and Saturday.

From the first, "The Rambler" was enthusiastically admired by a few eminent men. Richardson,[3] when only five numbers had appeared, pronounced it equal, if not superior, to "The Spectator." Young and Hartley expressed their approbation not less warmly. Bubb Dodington [4] — among whose many faults indif-

[1] *The Lay Monastery* ran from Nov. 16, 1713, to Feb. 15, 1714, under the direction of Sir Richard Blackmore and Mr. Hughes. *The Censor*, three volumes, appeared in 1717 under Lewis Theobald, the Shakespearean critic. *The Freethinker* ran for 159 numbers, Mar. 24, 1718, to Sept. 28, 1719, under Ambrose Philips. *The Plain Dealer* ran for 117 numbers, Mar. 27, 1724, to May 7, 1725, under Aaron Hill. *The Champion*, two volumes, appeared in 1741, and was directed by no less a personage than Henry Fielding.

[2] Johnson with his accustomed piety composed a special prayer for success on this occasion. The exact dates of the paper are Tuesday, March 20, 1750, to Saturday, March 14, 1752, — 208 numbers, all but about five of which were by Johnson.

[3] Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), practically the first English novelist, author of *Pamela*, etc. Johnson preferred him to his younger rival, Fielding. Richardson himself wrote No. 97 of *The Rambler*.

[4] The famous author of *Night-Thoughts*, Dr. Edward Young

ference to the claims of genius and learning cannot be reckoned — solicited the acquaintance of the writer. In consequence, probably, of the good offices of Dodington, who was then the confidential adviser of Prince Frederick, two of his Royal Highness's gentlemen carried a gracious message to the printing-office, and ordered seven copies for Leicester House.[1] But these overtures seem to have been very coldly received. Johnson had had enough of the patronage of the great to last him all his life, and was not disposed to haunt any other door as he had haunted the door of Chesterfield.

By the public "The Rambler" was at first very coldly received. Though the price of a number was only twopence, the sale did not amount to five hundred. The profits were therefore very small. But as soon as the flying leaves were collected and reprinted, they became popular. The author lived to see thirteen thousand copies spread over England alone. Separate editions were published for the Scotch and Irish markets. A large party pronounced the style perfect, — so absolutely perfect that in some essays it would be impossible for the writer himself to alter a single word for the better. Another party, not less numerous, vehemently accused him of having corrupted the purity of the English tongue. The best critics admitted that his diction was too monot-

(1681–1765), David Hartley (1705–1757), the metaphysician, and George Bubb Dodington (Lord Melcombe, 1691–1762), a much talked of, and not very highly esteemed, courtier whom Browning has made the subject of one of his *Parleyings*.

[1] The residence of the Prince of Wales, who quarreled with his father, George II. Frederick (1707–1751) was the father of George III.

onous, too obviously artificial, and now and then turgid even to absurdity. But they did justice to the acuteness of his observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language, to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages, and to the solemn yet pleasing humor of some of the lighter papers. On the question of precedence between Addison and Johnson, — a question which, seventy years ago, was much disputed, — posterity has pronounced a decision from which there is no appeal. Sir Roger, his chaplain and his butler, Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb, the Vision of Mirza, the Journal of the Retired Citizen, the Everlasting Club, the Dunmow Flitch, the Loves of Hilpah and Shalum, the Visit to the Exchange, and the Visit to the Abbey, are known to everybody.[1] But many men and women, even of highly cultivated minds, are unacquainted with Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, Quisquilius and Venustulus, the Allegory of Wit and Learning, the Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret, and the sad fate of Anningait and Ajut.

The last "Rambler" was written in a sad and gloomy hour. Mrs. Johnson had been given over by the physicians. Three days later she died. She left her husband almost broken-hearted. Many people had been surprised to see a man of his genius and learning stooping to every drudgery, and denying himself almost every comfort, for the purpose of supplying a silly, affected old woman with superfluities, which she accepted with but little gratitude. But

[1] "Dunmow Flitch" is Macaulay's own and not entirely accurate title for Nos. 607, 608 of *The Spectator*, which are not certainly by Addison.

all his affection had been concentrated on her. He had neither brother nor sister, neither son nor daughter. To him she was beautiful as the Gunnings,[1] and witty as Lady Mary.[2] Her opinion of his writings was more important to him than the voice of the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, or the judgment of "The Monthly Review." The chief support which had sustained him through the most arduous labor of his life was the hope that she would enjoy the fame and the profit which he anticipated from his Dictionary. She was gone; and in that vast labyrinth of streets, peopled by eight hundred thousand human beings, he was alone. Yet it was necessary for him to set himself, as he expressed it, doggedly to work. After three more laborious years, the Dictionary was at length complete.

It had been generally supposed that this great work would be dedicated to the eloquent and accomplished nobleman to whom the Prospectus had been addressed. He well knew the value of such a compliment; and therefore, when the day of publication drew near, he exerted himself to soothe, by a show of zealous and at the same time of delicate and judicious kindness, the pride which he had so cruelly wounded. Since the "Ramblers" had ceased to appear, the town had been entertained by a journal called "The

[1] Elizabeth (1734–1790) and Maria Gunning (1733–1760) were famous beauties, afterwards the Duchess of Hamilton and Countess of Coventry respectively.

[2] Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), known to Pope and his set as "Lady Mary," was a small poetess better known for her wit and her talents as a letter writer. She originated the famous characterization of Pope as "the wicked wasp of Twickenham." She also introduced inoculation into Europe.

World," to which many men of high rank and fashion contributed.[1] In two successive numbers of "The World" the Dictionary was, to use the modern phrase, puffed with wonderful skill. The writings of Johnson were warmly praised. It was proposed that he should be invested with the authority of a dictator, nay, of a pope, over our language, and that his decisions about the meaning and the spelling of words should be received as final. His two folios, it was said, would of course be bought by everybody who could afford to buy them. It was soon known that these papers were written by Chesterfield. But the just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased. In a letter[2] written with singular energy and dignity of thought and language, he repelled the tardy advances of his patron. The Dictionary came forth without a dedication. In the preface the author truly declared that he owed nothing to the great, and described the difficulties with which he had been left to struggle so forcibly and pathetically that the ablest and most malevolent of all the enemies of his fame, Horne Tooke,[3] never could read that passage without tears.

The public, on this occasion, did Johnson full justice, and something more than justice. The best

[1] Edited by Edward Moore (1712–1757), a forgotten poet. Chesterfield and Horace Walpole wrote for it, and it ran from Jan. 4, 1753, to Dec. 30, 1756 (209 numbers).

[2] See Boswell for this justly famous letter.

[3] John Horne (1736–1812), who subsequently added the name Tooke, is famous as a politician tried for high treason but acquitted, as a philologist whose *Diversions of Purley* is still read, and as a conversationalist who rivaled Johnson himself. The passage over which he wept is the concluding paragraph of the Preface.

lexicographer may well be content if his productions are received by the world with cold esteem. But Johnson's Dictionary was hailed with an enthusiasm such as no similar work has ever excited. It was, indeed, the first dictionary which could be read with pleasure. The definitions show so much acuteness of thought and command of language, and the passages quoted from poets, divines, and philosophers are so skilfully selected, that a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over the pages.[1] The faults of the book resolve themselves, for the most part, into one great fault. Johnson was a wretched etymologist. He knew little or nothing of any Teutonic language except English, which, indeed, as he wrote it, was scarcely a Teutonic language; and thus he was absolutely at the mercy of Junius and Skinner.[2]

The Dictionary, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means. The fifteen hundred guineas which the booksellers had agreed to pay him had been advanced and spent before the last sheets issued from the press. It is painful to relate that, twice in the course of the year which followed

[1] Some of the definitions are famous for their humor; in others Johnson showed his political bias, *e. g.*, *Lexicographer*, a harmless drudge, and *Excise*, a hateful tax.

[2] Francis Junius (1589–1677, of Huguenot extraction) and Stephen Skinner (1623–1667) were scholars who studied the Teutonic languages (*i. e.*, Gothic, German, Scandinavian, English, etc.) at a time when little was known of them. Junius is especially entitled to praise for his work in Anglo-Saxon. Macaulay's criticism is just, but Johnson, in consideration of the general ignorance with regard to etymology, should not be unduly censured. See Boswell for an amusing account of the Doctor's methods of work.

the publication of this great work, he was arrested and carried to sponging-houses, and that he was twice indebted for his liberty to his excellent friend Richardson. It was still necessary for the man who had been formally saluted by the highest authority as dictator of the English language to supply his wants by constant toil. He abridged his Dictionary. He proposed to bring out an edition of Shakespeare by subscription, and many subscribers sent in their names, and laid down their money; but he soon found the task so little to his taste that he turned to more attractive employments. He contributed many papers to a new monthly journal which was called "The Literary Magazine."[1] Few of these papers have much interest, but among them was the very best thing that he ever wrote, a masterpiece both of reasoning and of satirical pleasantry, the review of Jenyns's[2] "Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil."

In the spring of 1758 Johnson put forth the first of a series of essays entitled "The Idler." During two years these essays continued to appear weekly. They were eagerly read, widely circulated, and, indeed, impudently pirated while they were still in the original form, and had a large sale when collected into volumes. "The Idler" may be described as a second part of "The Rambler," somewhat livelier and somewhat weaker than the first part.[3]

[1] Founded in 1756, and lasted about three years, chiefly on Johnson's reputation.

[2] Soame Jenyns (1704–1787), a small poet, member of Parliament, and author of the above-named book, the style of which was much admired.

[3] The first number appeared Saturday, April 15, 1758; the

While Johnson was busied with his "Idlers," his mother, who had accomplished her ninetieth year, died at Lichfield. It was long since he had seen her; but he had not failed to contribute largely, out of his small means, to her comfort. In order to defray the charges of her funeral, and to pay some debts which she had left, he wrote a little book in a single week, and sent off the sheets to the press without reading them over. A hundred pounds were paid him for the copyright; and the purchasers had great cause to be pleased with their bargain, for the book was "Rasselas."[1]

The success of "Rasselas" was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Languish[2] must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume from the circulating library was little more than a dissertation on the author's favorite theme, the vanity of human wishes; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the princess without a lover; and that the story set the hero and the heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. "The Monthly Review" and "The Critical Review"[3] took

103d and last appeared Saturday, April 5, 1760. Johnson wrote all except perhaps twelve. The increased liveliness may even be seen in the fictitious names, which are no longer Latin as in *The Rambler*, but homely English, — such as Dick Linger, Betty Broom, and Deborah Ginger. Between *The Rambler* and *The Idler* Johnson wrote twenty-nine papers for *The Adventurer* of his friend, Dr. Hawkesworth, — so that, all told, he wrote nearly two hundred and twenty-five essays.

[1] *Rasselas, or the Prince of Abyssinia* (1759) is the best known of Johnson's prose works after the *Lives of the Poets*.

[2] A well-known character in Sheridan's *Rivals*.

[3] Set up by the Tories in 1756, under the editorship of Smollett, as a rival to the *Monthly* (1749), which was Whig.

different sides. Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting-woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendor. And both the censure and the praise were merited.

About the plan of "Rasselas" little was said by the critics, and yet the faults of the plan might seem to invite severe criticism. Johnson has frequently blamed Shakespeare for neglecting the proprieties of time and place, and for ascribing to one age or nation the manners and opinions of another. Yet Shakespeare has not sinned in this way more grievously than Johnson. Rasselas and Imlac, Nekayah and Pekuah, are evidently meant to be Abyssinians of the eighteenth century, for the Europe which Imlac describes is the Europe of the eighteenth century; and the inmates of the Happy Valley talk familiarly of that law of gravitation which Newton discovered, and which was not fully received, even at Cambridge,[1] till the eighteenth century. What a real company of Abyssinians would have been may be learned from Bruce's[2] "Travels." But Johnson, not content with

[1] Newton was a Cambridge man, and that university has been famous for mathematics, hence the use of "even."

[2] James Bruce (1730–94), the celebrated African traveler, whose *Travels* appeared in 1790 in five quarto volumes. The student will recall Johnson's early interest in the Abyssinians and his translation of Lobo.

turning filthy savages, ignorant of their letters and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as highly accomplished as Mrs. Lennox[1] or Mrs. Sheridan,[2] transferred the whole domestic system of England to Egypt. Into a land of harems, a land of polygamy, a land where women are married without ever being seen, he introduced the flirtations and jealousies of our ball-rooms. In a land where there is boundless liberty of divorce, wedlock is described as the indissoluble compact. "A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home and dream of each other. Such," says Rasselas, "is the common process of marriage." Such it may have been, and may still be, in London, but assuredly not at Cairo. A writer who was guilty of such improprieties had little right to blame the poet who made Hector quote Aristotle, and represented Julio Romano as flourishing in the days of the oracle of Delphi.[3]

By such exertions as have been described, Johnson

[1] Mrs. Charlotte Lennox (1720–1804) was the author of *The Female Quixote*, a novel of some vogue, and a woman for whom Johnson seems to have had considerable respect.

[2] Mrs. Frances Sheridan (1724–1766), the mother of the great dramatist and author of two novels.

[3] See *Troilus and Cressida*, II. ii., and *A Winter's Tale*, V. ii. Giulio Romano (1492–1546) was a distinguished Italian painter, a pupil of Raphael's. Macaulay's criticism of *Rasselas* is just in the main, but in spite of all its faults the story, like many another classic, retains a hold upon readers through the general appeal of its central theme and the soundness of its ethical content. Still Johnson was a moralist rather than a story-teller, though he actually tried his hand on a fairy tale (*The Fountains*).

supported himself till the year 1762. In that year a great change in his circumstances took place. He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise both in his works and in his conversation. Even in his massy and elaborate Dictionary, he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party. The excise, which was a favorite resource of Whig financiers, he had designated as a hateful tax. He had railed against the commissioners of excise in language so coarse that they had seriously thought of prosecuting him. He had with difficulty been prevented from holding up the lord privy seal[1] by name as an example of the meaning of the word "renegade." A pension he had defined as pay given to a state hireling to betray his country; a pensioner, as a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey a master. It seemed unlikely that the author of these definitions would himself be pensioned. But that was a time of wonders. George III. had ascended the throne,[2] and had, in the course of a few months, disgusted many of the old friends, and conciliated many of the old enemies, of his house. The city was becoming mutinous. Oxford was becoming loyal.[3] Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring.

[1] The keeper of the seal affixed to less important documents and to grants that are afterwards to pass under the great seal (kept by the Lord Chancellor). The lord privy seal is a member of the cabinet with little work to do. The keeper referred to was Lord Gower, whom Johnson regarded as a renegade because he gave up the Jacobite party.

[2] In 1760.

[3] That is, to the Hanoverians. It has always been loyal, and clung to the Stuarts as long as possible.

Somersets and Wyndhams[1] were hastening to kiss hands. The head of the treasury was now Lord Bute,[2] who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism. Bute wished to be thought a patron of men of letters, and Johnson was one of the most eminent and one of the most needy men of letters in Europe. A pension of three hundred a year was graciously offered, and with very little hesitation accepted.

This event produced a change in Johnson's whole way of life. For the first time since his boyhood, he no longer felt the daily goad urging him to the daily toil. He was at liberty, after thirty years of anxiety and drudgery, to indulge his constitutional indolence, to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking till four in the morning, without fearing either the printer's devil or the sheriff's officer.

One laborious task, indeed, he had bound himself to perform. He had received large subscriptions for his promised edition of Shakespeare; he had lived on those subscriptions during some years; and he could not, without disgrace, omit to perform his part of the contract. His friends repeatedly exhorted him to make an effort, and he repeatedly resolved to do so. But, notwithstanding their exhortations and his resolutions, month followed month, year followed year, and nothing was done. He prayed fervently against his idleness; he determined, as often as he received the sacrament, that he would no longer doze away and trifle away his time; but the spell under

[1] Representative Whig and Tory families respectively.

[2] John Stuart, Earl of Bute (1713–1792), became premier in 1762. For a good sketch of his incompetent administration see Macaulay's essay on Chatham.

which he lay resisted prayer and sacrament. His private notes at this time are made up of self-reproaches. "My indolence," he wrote on Easter Eve in 1764, "has sunk into grosser sluggishness. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year." Easter, 1765, came, and found him still in the same state. "My time," he wrote, "has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me."[1] Happily for his honor, the charm which held him captive was at length broken by no gentle or friendly hand. He had been weak enough to pay serious attention to a story about a ghost which haunted a house in Cock Lane,[2] and had actually gone himself, with some of his friends, at one in the morning, to St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, in the hope of receiving a communication from the perturbed spirit. But the spirit, though adjured with all solemnity, remained obstinately silent; and it soon appeared that a naughty girl of eleven had been amusing herself by making fools of so many philosophers. Churchill,[3] who, confident in his powers, drunk with popularity, and burning with party spirit, was looking for some man of established fame and Tory politics to insult, celebrated the Cock Lane ghost in three cantos, nick-

[1] Johnson's prayers and meditations were collected and published by George Strahan in 1785.

[2] See a chapter in Andrew Lang's recent book, *Cock Lane and Common Sense*. Doctor Johnson really assisted in detecting the imposture, so that Macaulay is unjust to him.

[3] Charles Churchill (1731–1764), a satirist of ability, whose vicious life was much talked of and is still remembered against him.

named Johnson Pomposo, asked where the book was which had been so long promised and so liberally paid for, and directly accused the great moralist of cheating.[1] This terrible word proved effectual; and in October, 1765, appeared, after a delay of nine years, the new edition of Shakespeare.

This publication saved Johnson's character for honesty, but added nothing to the fame of his abilities and learning. The preface, though it contains some good passages, is not in his best manner.[2] The most valuable notes are those in which he had an opportunity of showing how attentively he had, during many years, observed human life and human nature. The best specimen is the note on the character of Polonius.[3] Nothing so good is to be found even in Wilhelm Meister's[4] admirable examination of Hamlet. But here praise must end. It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless, edition of any great classic. The reader may turn over play after play without finding one happy conjectural emendation, or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators. Johnson had, in his Prospectus, told the world that

[1] Churchill's *The Ghost* was in *four* books. "Pomposo" is described in Book II., ll. 653–688. In Book III., ll. 799 *seq.*, the Shakespeare matter is brought in: —

> "How, for integrity renown'd,
> Which booksellers have often found,
> He for subscribers baits his hook,
> And takes their cash — but where 's the book?"

Doctor Johnson said of this satire that he thought Churchill a shallow fellow in the beginning, and had seen no reason for altering his opinion.

[2] This judgment will not pass unquestioned.

[3] See *Hamlet*.

[4] By Goethe — *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre*, IV. xiii.

he was peculiarly fitted for the task which he had undertaken, because he had, as a lexicographer, been under the necessity of taking a wider view of the English language than any of his predecessors. That his knowledge of our literature was extensive, is indisputable. But, unfortunately, he had altogether neglected that very part of our literature with which it is especially desirable that an editor of Shakespeare should be conversant. It is dangerous to assert a negative. Yet little will be risked by the assertion that in the two folio volumes of the English Dictionary there is not a single passage quoted from any dramatist of the Elizabethan age except Shakespeare and Ben.[1] Even from Ben the quotations are few. Johnson might easily, in a few months, have made himself well acquainted with every old play that was extant. But it never seems to have occurred to him that this was a necessary preparation for the work which he had undertaken. He would doubtless have admitted that it would be the height of absurdity in a man who was not familiar with the works of Æschylus and Euripides to publish an edition of Sophocles. Yet he ventured to publish an edition of Shakespeare without having ever in his life, as far as can be discovered, read a single scene of Massinger, Ford, Dekker, Webster, Marlowe, Beaumont, or Fletcher. His detractors were noisy and scurrilous. Those who most loved and honored him had little to say in praise of the manner in which he had discharged the duty of a commentator. He had, how-

[1] Ben Jonson (1573–1637). Macaulay practically gives a list of the chief Elizabethan dramatists (omitting Middleton, Peele, and one or two others), for whom the student may consult Saintsbury's *History of Elizabethan Literature.*

ever, acquitted himself of a debt which had long lain heavy on his conscience, and he sank back into the repose from which the sting of satire had roused him. He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won. He was honored by the University of Oxford with a doctor's degree,[1] by the Royal Academy[2] with a professorship, and by the King with an interview, in which his Majesty most graciously expressed a hope that so excellent a writer would not cease to write.[3] In the interval, however, between 1765 and 1775, Johnson published only two or three political tracts,[4] the longest of which he could have produced in forty-eight hours, if he had worked as he worked on the Life of Savage and on "Rasselas."

But, though his pen was now idle, his tongue was active. The influence exercised by his conversation, directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a parallel. His colloquial talents were, indeed, of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humor, immense knowledge of literature and of life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote. Every sentence which dropped from his

[1] In 1755, just before his *Dictionary* was published, Oxford gave him an M. A. Dublin gave him the degree of LL. D. in 1765, Oxford ten years later that of D. C. L.

[2] The Royal Academy of Arts was founded in 1768, Sir Joshua Reynolds being its first president. Johnson was made Professor in Ancient Literature, — an honor without salary.

[3] In February, 1767, "in the library at the queen's house." See Boswell.

[4] For example, *The False Alarm; The Patriot; Taxation no Tyranny*, etc.

lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of "The Rambler." But in his talk there were no pompous triads, and little more than a fair proportion of words in "osity" and "ation." All was simplicity, ease, and vigor. He uttered his short, weighty, and pointed sentences with a power of voice and a justness and energy of emphasis of which the effect was rather increased than diminished by the rollings of his huge form, and by the asthmatic gaspings and puffings in which the peals of his eloquence generally ended. Nor did the laziness which made him unwilling to sit down to his desk prevent him from giving instruction or entertainment orally. To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and so forcible that it might have been printed without the alteration of a word, was to him no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs and have his talk out. He was ready to bestow the overflowings of his full mind on anybody who would start a subject, — on a fellow-passenger in a stage-coach, or on the person who sat at the same table with him in an eating-house. But his conversation was nowhere so brilliant and striking as when he was surrounded by a few friends [1] whose abilities and knowledge enabled them, as he once expressed it, to send him back every ball that he threw. Some of these, in 1764, formed themselves into a club,[2] which gradually became a formid-

[1] It was so with Addison. See the essay on him.

[2] It met at the Turk's Head, Soho, and was called the Literary Club after Garrick's death. Macaulay gives the names of all the original members save those of Burke's father-in-law, Dr. Nugent, Mr. Anthony Chamier, and Sir John Hawkins (who wrote a life of Johnson). The club has been continued and

able power in the commonwealth of letters. The verdicts pronounced by this conclave on new books were speedily known over all London, and were sufficient to sell off a whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunk-maker and the pastry cook. Nor shall we think this strange when we consider what great and various talents and acquirements met in the little fraternity. Goldsmith was the representative of poetry and light literature; Reynolds, of the arts; Burke, of political eloquence and political philosophy. There, too, were Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist, of the age. Garrick brought to the meetings his inexhaustible pleasantry, his incomparable mimicry, and his consummate knowledge of stage effect. Among the most constant attendants were two high-born and high-bred gentlemen, closely bound together by friendship, but of widely different characters and habits, — Bennet Langton, distinguished by his skill in Greek literature, by the orthodoxy of his opinions, and by the sanctity of his life; and Topham Beauclerk,[1] renowned for his amours, his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic

Macaulay in Trevelyan's *Life and Letters* gives a pleasant account of attending a meeting of it. It may be noted that in 1749 Johnson had started a club which contained, however, no such celebrities. The idea of the great Club came from Sir Joshua.

[1] Of this list the names of Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), Burke, Gibbon (1737–1794), and Garrick are too familiar, or ought to be, to require a note. Macaulay says enough of Langton (1737–1801, who succeeded Johnson at the Royal Academy) and Beauclerk (1739–1780); and the student may look up the career of Sir William Jones (1746–1794), whose work as a jurist and oriental linguist is of very high importance. His poem *What constitutes a State* should also be read.

wit. To predominate over such a society was not easy. Yet even over such a society Johnson predominated. Burke might, indeed, have disputed the supremacy to which others were under the necessity of submitting. But Burke, though not generally a very patient listener, was content to take the second part when Johnson was present; and the club itself, consisting of so many eminent men, is to this day popularly designated as Johnson's Club.

Among the members of this celebrated body was one to whom it has owed the greater part of its celebrity, yet who was regarded with little respect by his brethren, and had not without difficulty obtained a seat among them. This was James Boswell,[1] a young Scotch lawyer, heir to an honorable name and a fair estate. That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humor, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings. And yet his writings are read beyond the Mississippi and under the Southern Cross, and are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead language. Nature had made him a slave and an idolater. His mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites, and which can subsist only by clinging round the stems, and imbibing the juices, of stronger plants. He must have fastened himself on somebody. He might have fastened himself on Wilkes,[2] and have become the fiercest patriot in the

[1] 1740–1795.

[2] John Wilkes (1727–1797), the notorious demagogue, editor of *The North Briton*. The society mentioned by Macaulay was founded to help Wilkes in his struggle with Parliament. See the essay on Chatham.

Bill of Rights Society. He might have fastened himself on Whitefield,[1] and have become the loudest field-preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists. In a happy hour he fastened himself on Johnson. The pair might seem ill-matched. For Johnson had early been prejudiced against Boswell's country.[2] To a man of Johnson's strong understanding and irritable temper, the silly egotism and adulation of Boswell must have been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly. Johnson hated to be questioned; and Boswell was eternally catechising him on all kinds of subjects, and sometimes propounded such questions as, "What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?" Johnson was a water-drinker and Boswell was a wine-bibber, and, indeed, little better than an habitual sot. It was impossible that there should be perfect harmony between two such companions. Indeed, the great man was sometimes provoked into fits of passion, in which he said things which the small man, during a few hours, seriously resented. Every quarrel, however, was soon made up. During twenty years, the disciple continued to worship the master;[3] the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him. The two friends ordinarily resided at a great distance from each other. Boswell practised in the Parliament House of Edinburgh, and could pay only occasional visits to London. During those visits, his chief business was to watch Johnson, to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the conversation to subjects about which John-

[1] George Whitefield (1714–1770), the famous revivalist.

[2] Scotland. Cf. his well-known definition of oats as a grain used as food for horses in England but for people in Scotland.

[3] Boswell first met Johnson in 1763.

son was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto note-books with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials out of which was afterwards constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world.

Soon after the club began to exist, Johnson formed a connection less important, indeed, to his fame, but much more important to his happiness, than his connection with Boswell. Henry Thrale — one of the most opulent brewers in the kingdom, a man of sound and cultivated understanding, rigid principles, and liberal spirit — was married to one of those clever, kind-hearted, engaging, vain, pert young women who are perpetually doing or saying what is not exactly right, but who, do or say what they may, are always agreeable.[1] In 1765 the Thrales became acquainted with Johnson, and the acquaintance ripened fast into friendship. They were astonished and delighted by the brilliancy of his conversation. They were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated preferred their house to any other in London. Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilized society — his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, the strange way in which he put on his clothes, the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his dinner, his fits of melancholy, his fits of anger, his frequent rudeness, his occasional ferocity — increased the interest which his new associates

[1] Mrs. Thrale was Hester Lynch Salisbury (1741–1821). She married Thrale in 1763, and after his death, in 1781, was fascinated by Gabriel Piozzi, an Italian music-teacher, and married him (1784). In 1786 she issued her valuable *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson.* She was a voluminous writer besides and a small poetess.

took in him. For these things were the cruel marks left behind by a life which had been one long conflict with disease and with adversity. In a vulgar hack writer, such oddities would have excited only disgust; but in a man of genius, learning, and virtue, their effect was to add pity to admiration and esteem. Johnson soon had an apartment at the brewery in Southwark,[1] and a still more pleasant apartment at the villa of his friends on Streatham Common.[2] A large part of every year he passed in those abodes, — abodes which must have seemed magnificent and luxurious indeed, when compared with the dens in which he had generally been lodged. But his chief pleasures were derived from what the astronomer of his Abyssinian tale called "the endearing elegance of female friendship." Mrs. Thrale rallied him, soothed him, coaxed him, and, if she sometimes provoked him by her flippancy, made ample amends by listening to his reproofs with angelic sweetness of temper. When he was diseased in body and in mind, she was the most tender of nurses. No comfort that wealth could purchase, no contrivance that womanly ingenuity, set to work by womanly compassion, could devise, was wanting to his sick-room. He requited her kindness by an affection pure as the affection of a father, yet delicately tinged with a gallantry which, though awkward, must have been more flattering than the attentions of a crowd of the fools who gloried in the names, now obsolete, of buck and maccaroni.[3] It

[1] A district on the south side of the Thames.

[2] About six miles out from what was then the town.

[3] Dandy or fop. Cf. "Yankee Doodle." Mac(c)aroni was the name given to a club of fast young men who had been abroad and had brought back a taste for foreign dress and manners.

should seem that a full half of Johnson's life, during about sixteen years, was passed under the roof of the Thrales. He accompanied the family sometimes to Bath,[1] and sometimes to Brighton,[2] once to Wales, and once to Paris.[3] But he had at the same time a house in one of the narrow and gloomy courts on the north of Fleet Street. In the garrets was his library, a large and miscellaneous collection of books, falling to pieces, and begrimed with dust. On a lower floor he sometimes, but very rarely, regaled a friend with a plain dinner, — a veal pie, or a leg of lamb and spinach, and a rice pudding. Nor was the dwelling uninhabited during his long absences. It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment Johnson had placed an old lady named Williams, whose chief recommendations were her blindness and her poverty. But, in spite of her murmurs and reproaches, he gave an asylum to another lady who was as poor as herself, Mrs. Desmoulins, whose family he had known many years before in Staffordshire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Miss Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack doctor named Levett,[4] who bled and dosed coal-heav-

[1] The leading watering-place of the eighteenth century.

[2] A famous seaside resort.

[3] In 1775.

[4] For this old quack, who died Jan. 17, 1782, Johnson wrote an elegy entitled *On the Death of Mr. Robert Levet, a Practiser in Physic*, that for genuine sentiment and admirable style deserves a high place in its class of compositions, and suggests a regret that its author did not oftener try his hand on similar subjects.

ers and hackney-coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this strange menagerie. All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other and with Johnson's negro servant Frank. Sometimes, indeed, they transferred their hostilities from the servant to the master, complained that a better table was not kept for them, and railed or maundered till their benefactor was glad to make his escape to Streatham, or to the Mitre Tavern.[1] And yet he who was generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller, or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from mendicants, who but for his bounty must have gone to the workhouse, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne and bidden defiance to Chesterfield. Year after year Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins, Polly and Levett, continued to torment him and to live upon him.

The course of life which has been described was interrupted in Johnson's sixty-fourth year by an important event. He had early read an account of the Hebrides, and had been much interested by learning that there was so near him a land peopled by a race which was still as rude and simple as in the Middle Ages. A wish to become intimately acquainted with a state of society so utterly unlike all that he had ever seen, frequently crossed his mind. But it is not probable that his curiosity would have overcome his habitual sluggishness, and his love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, had not Boswell im-

[1] In Fleet Street.

portuned him to attempt the adventure, and offered to be his squire. At length, in August, 1773, Johnson crossed the Highland line, and plunged courageously into what was then considered, by most Englishmen, as a dreary and perilous wilderness. After wandering about two months through the Celtic region, sometimes in rude boats which did not protect him from the rain, and sometimes on small shaggy ponies which could hardly bear his weight, he returned to his old haunts with a mind full of new images and new theories. During the following year he employed himself in recording his adventures. About the beginning of 1775, his "Journey to the Hebrides" was published, and was, during some weeks, the chief subject of conversation in all circles in which any attention was paid to literature. The book is still read with pleasure. The narrative is entertaining; the speculations, whether sound or unsound, are always ingenious; and the style, though too stiff and pompous, is somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings. His prejudice against the Scotch had at length become little more than matter of jest; and whatever remained of the old feeling had been effectually removed by the kind and respectful hospitality with which he had been received in every part of Scotland. It was, of course, not to be expected that an Oxonian Tory should praise the Presbyterian polity and ritual, or that an eye accustomed to the hedgerows and parks of England should not be struck by the bareness of Berwickshire and East Lothian. But even in censure Johnson's tone is not unfriendly. The most enlightened Scotchmen, with Lord Mansfield[1] at their

[1] William Murray, Earl of Mansfield (1705–1793), one of the greatest of British jurists.

head, were well pleased. But some foolish and ignorant Scotchmen were moved to anger by a little unpalatable truth which was mingled with much eulogy, and assailed him, whom they chose to consider as the enemy of their country, with libels much more dishonorable to their country than anything that he had ever said or written. They published paragraphs in the newspapers, articles in the magazines, sixpenny pamphlets, five-shilling books. One scribbler abused Johnson for being blear-eyed; another, for being a pensioner; a third informed the world that one of the doctor's uncles had been convicted of felony in Scotland, and had found that there was in that country one tree capable of supporting the weight of an Englishman. Macpherson,[1] whose "Fingal" had been proved in the "Journey"[2] to be an impudent forgery, threatened to take vengeance with a cane. The only effect of this threat was, that Johnson reiterated the charge of forgery in the most contemptuous terms, and walked about, during some time, with a cudgel, which, if the impostor had not been too wise to encounter it, would assuredly have descended upon him, to borrow the sublime language of his own epic poem, "like a hammer on the red son of the furnace."

[1] The details of the Ossian controversy started by James Macpherson's (1738–1796) epic *Fingal* (1762), which purported to be a translation from the Gaelic bard of the third century, A. D., cannot be given here. It is generally held that Macpherson drew mainly upon his own imagination, for he never produced documentary evidence for his claims. His poems were, however, immensely popular for a while both in England and on the Continent. Thomas Jefferson admired him greatly.

[2] In the division entitled "Ostig in Sky." All mention of Macpherson by name is carefully avoided, which doubtless made him more angry.

Of other assailants Johnson took no notice whatever. He had early resolved never to be drawn into controversy; and he adhered to his resolution with a steadfastness which is the more extraordinary because he was, both intellectually and morally, of the stuff of which controversialists are made. In conversation he was a singularly eager, acute, and pertinacious disputant. When at a loss for good reasons, he had recourse to sophistry; and when heated by altercation, he made unsparing use of sarcasm and invective. But when he took his pen in his hand, his whole character seemed to be changed. A hundred bad writers misrepresented him and reviled him; but not one of the hundred could boast of having been thought by him worthy of a refutation, or even of a retort. The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicols, and Hendersons[1] did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter: —

"Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum."[2]

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle

[1] See Hill's or Napier's edition of Boswell for these obscure men.

[2] "I desire very much to contend with you if you are willing."

with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttlecock, which could be kept up only by being beaten back as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apothegm of Bentley,[1] that no man was ever written down but by himself.

Unhappily, a few months after the appearance of the "Journey to the Hebrides," Johnson did what none of his envious assailants could have done, and to a certain extent succeeded in writing himself down. The disputes between England and her American colonies had reached a point at which no amicable adjustment was possible. Civil war was evidently impending; and the ministers seem to have thought that the eloquence of Johnson might with advantage be employed to inflame the nation against the opposition here, and against the rebels beyond the Atlantic. He had already written two or three tracts in defence of the foreign and domestic policy of the government; and those tracts, though hardly worthy of him, were much superior to the crowd of pamphlets which lay on the counters of Almon and Stockdale.[2] But his "Taxation no Tyranny"[3] was a pitiable failure. The very title was a silly phrase,

[1] Richard Bentley (1662–1742), in some respects the greatest classical scholar England has produced. He has gained a place in English literature by his masterly *Dissertation*, in which he showed that the so-called Epistles of Phalaris were spurious, and won a complete victory over such men as Atterbury, Swift, and Temple. See Swift's *Battle of the Books*, Macaulay's essay on Atterbury, and the *Dissertation* itself.

[2] Well-known booksellers of the period.

[3] Appeared in 1775, and was a defense of the government policy toward the American colonies.

which can have been recommended to his choice by nothing but a jingling alliteration which he ought to have despised. The arguments were such as boys use in debating societies. The pleasantry was as awkward as the gambols of a hippopotamus. Even Boswell was forced to own that in this unfortunate piece he could detect no trace of his master's powers. The general opinion was, that the strong faculties which had produced the Dictionary and "The Rambler" were beginning to feel the effect of time and of disease, and that the old man would best consult his credit by writing no more.

But this was a great mistake. Johnson had failed, not because his mind was less vigorous than when he wrote "Rasselas" in the evenings of a week, but because he had foolishly chosen, or suffered others to choose for him, a subject such as he would at no time have been competent to treat. He was in no sense a statesman. He never willingly read, or thought, or talked about, affairs of state. He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother country was a question about which he had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan;[1] as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had tried to paint landscapes like those of

[1] Richard Brinsley (Butler) Sheridan (1751–1816) in his *Rivals* and *School for Scandal* was, with the possible exception of Goldsmith, the best writer of comedies since Congreve's time. He was also a noted orator.

Wilson.[1] Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay.

On Easter Eve, 1777, some persons, deputed by a meeting which consisted of forty of the first booksellers in London, called upon him. Though he had some scruples about doing business at that season, he received his visitors with much civility. They came to inform him that a new edition of the English poets, from Cowley downwards, was in contemplation, and to ask him to furnish short biographical prefaces. He readily undertook the task, a task for which he was preëminently qualified. His knowledge of the literary history of England since the Restoration was unrivalled. That knowledge he had derived partly from books, and partly from sources which had long been closed, — from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults; from the recollections of such men as Gilbert Walmesley, who had conversed with the wits of Button;[2] Cibber,[3] who had mutilated the plays of two generations of dramatists; Orrery,[4] who had been admitted to the society

[1] Richard Wilson (1714–1782).

[2] Button's coffee-house, near Covent Garden, was frequented by Addison and his friends. Its proprietor had been butler to Lady Warwick.

[3] Colley Cibber (1671–1757) was an actor and a dramatist of versatility who, absurdly enough, was made poet laureate. He was satirized in the *Dunciad* and felt Dr. Johnson's wrath. He is now remembered chiefly for his *Autobiography* and for the line, "Richard is himself again," which he introduced into his version of Richard III.

[4] John Boyle (1707–1662), fifth earl of Orrery, who wrote a biography of Swift.

of Swift; and Savage, who had rendered services of no very honorable kind to Pope.[1] The biographer, therefore, sat down to his task with a mind full of matter. He had at first intended to give only a paragraph to every minor poet, and only four or five pages to the greatest name. But the flood of anecdote and criticism overflowed the narrow channel. The work, which was originally meant to consist only of a few sheets, swelled into ten volumes, — small volumes, it is true, and not closely printed. The first four appeared in 1779, the remaining six in 1781.[2]

The "Lives of the Poets" are, on the whole, the best of Johnson's works. The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and on human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent, and, even when grossly and provokingly unjust, well deserve to be studied; for, however erroneous they may be, they are never silly. They are the judgments of a mind trammeled by prejudice and deficient in sensibility, but vigorous and acute. They therefore generally contain a portion of valuable truth which deserves to be separated from the alloy, and at the very worst they mean something, — a praise to which much of what is called criticism in our time has no pretensions.

Savage's "Life" Johnson reprinted nearly as it had appeared in 1744. Whoever, after reading that life, will turn to the other lives, will be struck by the difference of style. Since Johnson had been at ease in his circumstances, he had written little and had

[1] Helped him on the *Dunciad*. See Johnson's *Life of Savage*.

[2] Matthew Arnold edited the more important *Lives*, and Mr. Arthur Waugh has since edited the complete work.

talked much. When, therefore, he, after the lapse of years, resumed his pen, the mannerism which he had contracted while he was in the constant habit of elaborate composition was less perceptible than formerly; and his diction frequently had a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted. The improvement may be discerned by a skilful critic in the "Journey to the Hebrides," and in the "Lives of the Poets" is so obvious that it cannot escape the notice of the most careless reader.

Among the lives the best are, perhaps, those of Cowley, Dryden, and Pope. The very worst is, beyond all doubt, that of Gray.[1]

This great work at once became popular. There was, indeed, much just and much unjust censure; but even those who were loudest in blame were attracted by the book in spite of themselves. Malone[2] computed the gains of the publishers at five or six thousand pounds. But the writer was very poorly remunerated. Intending at first to write very short prefaces, he had stipulated for only two hundred guineas. The booksellers, when they saw how far his performance had surpassed his promise, added only another hundred. Indeed, Johnson, though he did not despise, or affect to despise, money, and though his strong sense and long experience ought to have qualified him to protect his own interests, seems

[1] Arnold selected the Lives of Milton, Addison, Swift, Dryden, Pope and Gray, but he was influenced by the place they occupy in literature. Johnson was not well fitted to appreciate Thomas Gray (1716–1771), but this fact hardly accounts for the deficiencies of his account of that great scholar and poet.

[2] Edmund Malone (1741–1812), chiefly noted for his labors as an editor of Shakespeare. He also edited Boswell.

to have been singularly unskillful and unlucky in his literary bargains. He was generally reputed the first English writer of his time, yet several writers of his time sold their copyrights for sums such as he never ventured to ask. To give a single instance, Robertson[1] received four thousand five hundred pounds for the "History of Charles V.;" and it is no disrespect to the memory of Robertson to say that the "History of Charles V." is both a less valuable and a less amusing book than the "Lives of the Poets."

Johnson was now in his seventy-second year. The infirmities of age were coming fast upon him. That inevitable event of which he never thought without horror was brought near to him, and his whole life was darkened by the shadow of death. He had often to pay the cruel price of longevity. Every year he lost what could never be replaced. The strange dependents to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one; and in the silence of his home he regretted even the noise of their scolding-matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more, and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who had envied her, and to draw, from the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond anything in the world, tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave. With some estimable and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of

[1] Dr. William Robertson (1721–1793), one of Johnson's few Scotch friends. The history of the great Emperor and that relating to America are still standard books, but are probably little read.

a mind more steadfast than her own was necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained by her husband, — a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house, — her worst offences had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness ending in sunny good-humor. But he was gone; and she was left an opulent widow of forty, with strong sensibility, volatile fancy, and slender judgment. She soon fell in love with a music-master from Brescia, in whom nobody but herself could discover anything to admire. Her pride, and perhaps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion; but the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his inspection. Her manner towards him changed. She was sometimes cold and sometimes petulant. She did not conceal her joy when he left Streatham; she never pressed him to return; and if he came unbidden, she received him in a manner which convinced him that he was no longer a welcome guest. He took the very intelligible hints which she gave. He read, for the last time, a chapter of the Greek Testament in the library which had been formed by himself. In a solemn and tender prayer, he commended the house and its inmates to the Divine protection, and, with emotions which choked his voice and convulsed his powerful frame, left forever that beloved home for the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street, where the few and evil days which still remained to him were to run out. Here, in June, 1783, he had a paralytic stroke, from which,

however, he recovered, and which does not appear to have at all impaired his intellectual faculties. But other maladies came thick upon him. His asthma tormented him day and night. Dropsical symptoms made their appearance. While sinking under a complication of diseases, he heard that the woman whose friendship had been the chief happiness of sixteen years of his life had married an Italian fiddler, that all London was crying shame upon her, and that the newspapers and magazines were filled with allusions to the Ephesian matron[1] and the two pictures in "Hamlet."[2] He vehemently said that he would try to forget her existence. He never uttered her name. Every memorial of her which met his eye he flung into the fire. She, meanwhile, fled from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and countrywomen to a land where she was unknown, hastened across Mont Cenis, and learned, while passing a merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties at Milan, that the great man with whose name hers is inseparably associated had ceased to exist.[3]

He had, in spite of much mental and much bodily affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling described in that fine but gloomy paper[4] which closes the series of his "Idlers" seemed to grow stronger in

[1] See Petronius Arbiter, chap. xiii. (Bohn). The matron went down to die in the tomb where her husband was lying dead, and fell in love with a guard stationed near by. The story is found in various forms.

[2] Act III. scene iv.

[3] Macaulay seems to have done injustice to Mrs. Piozzi and her husband. Johnson's letter, to the widow, of July 8, 1784, should be read in connection with this passage. It is one of the most pathetic in literature.

[4] The paper mentioned is an admirable specimen of Johnson's

him as his last hour drew near. He fancied that he should be able to draw his breath more easily in a southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples, but for his fear of the expense of the journey. That expense, indeed, he had the means of defraying; for he had laid up about two thousand pounds, the fruit of labors which had made the fortune of several publishers. But he was unwilling to break in upon this hoard, and he seems to have wished even to keep its existence a secret. Some of his friends hoped that the government might be induced to increase his pension to six hundred pounds a year; but this hope was disappointed, and he resolved to stand one English winter more. That winter was his last. His legs grew weaker; his breath grew shorter; the fatal water gathered fast, in spite of incisions which he — courageous against pain, but timid against death — urged his surgeons to make deeper and deeper. Though the tender care which had mitigated his sufferings during months of sickness at Streatham was withdrawn, he was not left desolate. The ablest physicians and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him with deep emotion. Windham[1] sat much in the sick-room, arranged the pillows, and sent his own servant to watch at night by the bed. Frances Burney,[2] whom the old man had

power of moralizing in a sincere and moving way. It should be read by all who are interested in the Doctor, whether as a writer or as a man.

[1] William Windham (1750–1810), a noted parliamentary orator.

[2] 1752–1840, afterwards Madame d'Arblay. (See Macaulay's essay on her.) Her novel *Evelina* is a classic worthy of Macaulay's well-known praise.

cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently qualified him to be an adviser and comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. When at length the moment, dreaded through so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His temper became unusually patient and gentle; he ceased to think with terror of death and of that which lies beyond death; and he spoke much of the mercy of God and of the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died, on the 13th of December, 1784. He was laid a week later in Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian, — Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison.[1]

Since his death, the popularity of his works — the "Lives of the Poets" and perhaps "The Vanity of Human Wishes" excepted — has greatly diminished. His Dictionary has been altered by editors till it can scarcely be called his. An allusion to his "Rambler" or his "Idler" is not readily apprehended in literary circles. The fame even of "Rasselas" has grown somewhat dim. But, though the celebrity of the writings may have declined, the celebrity of the writer, strange to say, is as great as ever. Boswell's book has done for him more than the best

[1] For these great inhabitants of "Poets' Corner" the text and notes have already given sufficient explanation, save, perhaps, in the case of William Congreve (1670–1729), the brilliant dramatist, whose comedies are in some respects unrivaled, and of Matthew Prior (1664–1721), who as a writer of society verse is still unclipsed, though Praed and Austin Dobson have followed him.

of his own books could do. The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works, but the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive. The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons, and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuosities[1] of his intellect and of his temper serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man.[2]

[1] That is, the windings and turnings.

[2] The style of this concluding paragraph may well be compared with that of the conclusion of the essay on Milton. It is much quieter and is free from many of the defects of the more youthful work, yet somewhat lacks the *élan* of the latter. Indeed, the whole essay shows a chastened Macaulay and so has won high praise from the fastidious critic, whom the panegyric on Milton sometimes displeased, Mr. Matthew Arnold. In its evolution, too, the essay is perfectly simple and straightforward, so that an analysis by paragraphs would be an easy task for the youngest student. This very freedom from complexity accounts in part for the popularity of the composition.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The short sketch of Goldsmith was contributed to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in 1856, and is still included in the latest edition. Like the essay on Johnson it represents Macaulay at his best. There is little of the partisanship, the exaggeration, the misleading but fascinating rhetoric to be found in many of the earlier essays; but there is the same fullness of knowledge, the same facility of allusion and reference, the same clarity and straightforwardness of style. As in the Johnson there is a sympathy with the subject of his sketch (who could fail to sympathize with Goldsmith!) which Macaulay did not always have, hence the reader puts the essay down with a feeling of attraction toward both the wayward genius and his exemplary critic. There can be no better test of good criticism than this.

As for Goldsmith, it is too late in the day to undertake his praise. He shares with Charles Lamb the distinction of deserving an epithet which the French threw away upon one of their most worthless kings, — the Well Beloved. Everybody reads *The Vicar of Wakefield* and *The Deserted Village*, and everybody loves their author. A distinguished American economist once told the present writer that he never began to compose a new book without first reading here and there in Goldsmith, in order that he might, if possible, catch something of the secret of that artless style which has captivated generations of readers. The student can do no better than to follow this excellent example; at any rate he should not fail to make himself experience the charm of Goldsmith's style, whether he imitate it or not. This he can easily do, for the complete works — that is, the miscellaneous works, which are all one needs — are accessible in the Globe edition, to which Professor Masson has prefixed

an excellent introduction. The standard biographies are mentioned by Macaulay, and to these may be added those by the novelist William Black (in the *English Men of Letters*) and by the poet Austin Dobson (in the *Great Writers*, with a bibliography).

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

Oliver Goldsmith was one of the most pleasing English writers of the eighteenth century. He was of a Protestant and Saxon family which had been long settled in Ireland, and which had, like most other Protestant and Saxon families, been in troubled times harassed and put in fear by the native population. His father, Charles Goldsmith, studied, in the reign of Queen Anne, at the diocesan school of Elphin,[1] became attached to the daughter of the schoolmaster, married her, took orders, and settled at a place called Pallas, in the county of Longford. There he with difficulty supported his wife and children on what he could earn, partly as a curate and partly as a farmer.

At Pallas Oliver Goldsmith was born in November, 1728.[2] That spot was then, for all practical purposes, almost as remote from the busy and splendid capital in which his later years were passed, as any clearing in Upper Canada or any sheep-walk in Australasia now is. Even at this day, those enthusiasts who venture to make a pilgrimage to the birthplace of the poet are forced to perform the latter part of their journey on foot. The hamlet lies far from any

[1] In Roscommon County. For the history of Ireland at this juncture, consult Lecky and Froude.

[2] November 19th.

high-road, on a dreary plain, which in wet weather is often a lake. The lanes would break any jaunting car[1] to pieces; and there are ruts and sloughs through which the most strongly built wheels cannot be dragged.

When Oliver was still a child, his father was presented to a living, worth about two hundred pounds a year, in the county of Westmeath. The family accordingly quitted their cottage in the wilderness for a spacious house on a frequented road, near the village of Lissoy. Here the boy was taught his letters by a maid-servant, and was sent in his seventh year to a village school kept by an old quartermaster[2] on half-pay, who professed to teach nothing but reading, writing, and arithmetic, but who had an inexhaustible fund of stories about ghosts, banshees,[3] and fairies, — about the great Rapparee[4] chiefs, Baldearg O'Donnell and galloping Hogan, and about the exploits of Peterborough and Stanhope,[5] the surprise of Monjuich, and the glorious disaster of Brihuega. This man must have been of the Protestant religion;

[1] A typically Irish vehicle.

[2] "Paddy" Byrne.

[3] A female fairy, believed to be attached to a particular house, and to foretell at each appearance the death of an inmate.

[4] The word means a noisy fellow, — then a vagrant or robber. It refers specifically to wild native Irishmen, who for many years committed agrarian outrages. Hugh Baldearg O'Donnell, one of the most noted of these freebooters, died in 1704.

[5] Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough (1658?–1735), and James, Lord Stanhope (1673–1721), were both generals who won great reputation in Spain during the War of the Spanish Succession, especially in the battles mentioned. Peterborough had a very romantic career, and Stanhope was afterwards an important statesman.

but he was of the aboriginal race, and not only spoke the Irish language, but could pour forth unpremeditated Irish verses. Oliver early became, and through life continued to be, a passionate admirer of the Irish music, and especially of the compositions of Carolan,[1] some of the last notes of whose harp he heard. It ought to be added that Oliver, though by birth one of the Englishry, and though connected by numerous ties with the Established Church, never showed the least sign of that contemptuous antipathy with which, in his days, the ruling minority in Ireland too generally regarded the subject majority. So far, indeed, was he from sharing in the opinions and feelings of the caste to which he belonged, that he conceived an aversion to the Glorious and Immortal Memory,[2] and, even when George the Third was on the throne, maintained that nothing but the restoration of the banished dynasty could save the country.

From the humble academy kept by the old soldier Goldsmith was removed in his ninth year. He went to several grammar schools, and acquired some knowledge of the ancient languages. His life at this time seems to have been far from happy. He had, as appears from the admirable portrait of him at Knowle,[3] features harsh even to ugliness. The small-pox[4] had set its mark on him with more than usual severity. His stature was small, and his limbs ill put together. Among boys, little tenderness is

[1] Turlogh Carolan (1670–1738), the most famous of the modern Irish bards.

[2] The formula used in the Whig toast to William III.

[3] Better spelt Knole, the seat of Lord Sackville in Kent, one of the finest baronial halls in England. The portrait mentioned is by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

[4] This disease was very common at the time.

shown to personal defects; and the ridicule excited by poor Oliver's appearance was heightened by a peculiar simplicity and a disposition to blunder which he retained to the last. He became the common butt of boys and masters, was pointed at as a fright in the playground, and flogged as a dunce in the school-room. When he had risen to eminence, those who once derided him ransacked their memory for the events of his early years, and recited repartees and couplets which had dropped from him, and which, though little noticed at the time, were supposed, a quarter of a century later, to indicate the powers which produced "The Vicar of Wakefield" and "The Deserted Village."

In his seventeenth year Oliver went up to Trinity College, Dublin, as a sizar.[1] The sizars paid nothing for food and tuition, and very little for lodging; but they had to perform some menial services from which they have long been relieved. They swept the court; they carried up the dinner to the fellows' table, and changed the plates and poured out the ale of the rulers of the society. Goldsmith was quartered, not alone, in a garret, on the window of which his name, scrawled by himself, is still read with interest. From such garrets many men of less parts than his have made their way to the wool-sack or to the episcopal bench.[2] But Goldsmith, while he suffered all the humiliations, threw away all the advantages of his situation. He neglected the studies of the place, stood low at the examinations, was turned down to

[1] A term applied to certain undergraduates at Cambridge and Trinity College, Dublin, sufficiently described in the text.

[2] That is, have become Lord Chancellors or Bishops sitting in the House of Peers.

the bottom of his class for playing the buffoon in the lecture-room, was severely reprimanded for pumping on a constable, and was caned by a brutal tutor[1] for giving a ball in the attic story of the college to some gay youths and damsels from the city.

While Oliver was leading at Dublin a life divided between squalid distress and squalid dissipation, his father died,[2] leaving a mere pittance. The youth obtained his bachelor's degree and left the university. During some time, the humble dwelling to which his widowed mother had retired was his home. He was now in his twenty-first year; it was necessary that he should do something, and his education seemed to have fitted him to do nothing but to dress himself in gaudy colors, of which he was as fond as a magpie, to take a hand at cards, to sing Irish airs, to play the flute, to angle in summer, and to tell ghost stories by the fire in winter. He tried five or six professions in turn without success. He applied for ordination; but, as he applied in scarlet clothes, he was speedily turned out of the episcopal palace.[3] He then became tutor in an opulent family, but soon quitted his situation in consequence of a dispute about play. Then he determined to emigrate to America. His relations, with much satisfaction, saw him set out for Cork on a good horse, with thirty pounds in his pocket. But in six weeks he came back on a miserable hack without a penny, and informed his mother that the ship in which he had taken his passage, having got a fair wind while he was at a party of pleasure, had sailed without him.[4]

[1] His name was Wilder. [2] In 1747. [3] Of Elphin.

[4] Compare with the adventures of Moses in *The Vicar of Wakefield.*

Then he resolved to study the law. A generous kinsman[1] advanced fifty pounds. With this sum Goldsmith went to Dublin, was enticed into a gaming-house, and lost every shilling. He then thought of medicine. A small purse was made up, and in his twenty-fourth year he was sent to Edinburgh.[2] At Edinburgh he passed eighteen months in nominal attendance on lectures, and picked up some superficial information about chemistry and natural history. Thence he went to Leyden, still pretending to study physic. He left that celebrated university — the third university at which he had resided — in his twenty-seventh year, without a degree, with the merest smattering of medical knowledge, and with no property but his clothes and his flute. His flute, however, proved a useful friend. He rambled on foot through Flanders, France, and Switzerland, playing tunes which everywhere set the peasantry dancing, and which often procured for him a supper and a bed. He wandered as far as Italy. His musical performances, indeed, were not to the taste of the Italians, but he contrived to live on the alms which he obtained at the gates of convents. It should, however, be observed, that the stories which he told about this part of his life ought to be received with great caution, for strict veracity was never one of his virtues; and a man who is ordinarily inaccurate in narration is likely to be more than ordinarily inaccurate when he talks about his own travels. Goldsmith, indeed, was so regardless of truth as to assert in print that he was present at a most interesting conversation be-

[1] His uncle by marriage, Rev. Thomas Contarine.

[2] The university of that city, noted for its school of medical science.

tween Voltaire and Fontenelle,[1] and that this conversation took place at Paris. Now it is certain that Voltaire never was within a hundred leagues of Paris during the whole time which Goldsmith passed on the Continent.

In 1756 the wanderer landed at Dover, without a shilling, without a friend, and without a calling. He had, indeed, if his own unsupported evidence may be trusted, obtained from the University of Padua a doctor's degree; but this dignity proved utterly useless to him. In England his flute was not in request; there were no convents; and he was forced to have recourse to a series of desperate expedients. He turned strolling player, but his face and figure were ill suited to the boards even of the humblest theatre. He pounded drugs and ran about London with phials for charitable chemists. He joined a swarm of beggars which made its nest in Axe Yard. He was for a time usher[2] of a school, and felt the miseries and humiliations of this situation so keenly that he thought it a promotion to be permitted to earn his bread as a bookseller's hack; but he soon found the new yoke more galling than the old one, and was glad to become an usher again. He obtained a medical appointment in the service of the East India Company, but the appointment was speedily revoked. Why it was revoked we are not told. The subject was one on which he never liked to talk. It is probable that he was incompetent to perform the duties of the place. Then he presented himself at Surgeons'

[1] Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657–1757), a noted French writer.

[2] That is, assistant master.

Hall[1] for examination as mate to a naval hospital. Even to so humble a post he was found unequal. By this time the schoolmaster whom he had served for a morsel of food and the third part of a bed was no more. Nothing remained but to return to the lowest drudgery of literature. Goldsmith took a garret in a miserable court, to which he had to climb from the brink of Fleet Ditch by a dizzy ladder of flagstones called Breakneck Steps. The court and the ascent have long disappeared,[2] but old Londoners well remember both. Here, at thirty, the unlucky adventurer sat down to toil like a galley-slave.

In the succeeding six years he sent to the press some things which have survived, and many which have perished. He produced articles for reviews,[3] magazines, and newspapers; children's books, which, bound in gilt paper and adorned with hideous woodcuts, appeared in the window of the once far-famed shop at the corner of St. Paul's Churchyard;[4] "An Inquiry into the State of Polite Learning in Europe," which, though of little or no value, is still reprinted among his works; a "Life of Beau Nash," which is not reprinted,[5] though it well deserves to be so; a superficial and incorrect but very readable "History of England," in a series of letters purporting to be

[1] That is, the buildings of the Royal College of Surgeons, which trains and examines candidates for the medical profession.

[2] The accuracy of this statement has been questioned.

[3] Mainly for *The Monthly Review*, started in 1749 by the bookseller Griffiths.

[4] It was kept by John Newbery.

[5] Richard Nash (1674–1761) was a celebrated leader of fashion, a predecessor of "Beau" Brummel. The work has been reprinted.

addressed by a nobleman to his son; and some very lively and amusing "Sketches of London Society," in a series of letters purporting to be addressed by a Chinese traveler to his friends.[1] All these works were anonymous, but some of them were well known to be Goldsmith's; and he gradually rose in the estimation of the booksellers for whom he drudged. He was, indeed, emphatically a popular writer. For accurate research or grave disquisition he was not well qualified by nature or by education. He knew nothing accurately: his reading had been desultory, nor had he meditated deeply on what he had read. He had seen much of the world; but he had noticed and retained little more of what he had seen than some grotesque incidents and characters which happened to strike his fancy. But, though his mind was very scantily stored with materials, he used what materials he had in such a way as to produce a wonderful effect. There have been many greater writers, but perhaps no writer was ever more uniformly agreeable. His style was always pure and easy, and, on proper occasions, pointed and energetic. His narratives were always amusing; his descriptions always picturesque; his humor rich and joyous, yet not without an occasional tinge of amiable sadness. About everything that he wrote, serious or sportive, there was a certain natural grace and decorum hardly to be expected from a man a great part of whose life had been passed among thieves and beggars, street-walkers and merry-andrews, in those squalid dens which are the reproach of great capitals.

[1] In imitation of Montesquieu's celebrated *Persian Letters.* Goldsmith's letters appeared in *The Public Ledger* for 1760, and afterwards formed his well-known *Citizen of the World.*

As his name gradually became known, the circle of his acquaintance widened. He was introduced to Johnson, who was then considered as the first of living English writers; to Reynolds, the first of English painters; and to Burke, who had not yet entered Parliament, but had distinguished himself greatly by his writings and by the eloquence of his conversation. With these eminent men Goldsmith became intimate. In 1763 he was one of the nine original members of that celebrated fraternity which has sometimes been called the Literary Club, but which has always disclaimed that epithet, and still glories in the simple name of "The Club."[1]

By this time Goldsmith had quitted his miserable dwelling at the top of Breakneck Steps, and had taken chambers in the more civilized region of the Inns of Court. But he was still often reduced to pitiable shifts. Towards the close of 1764 his rent was so long in arrear that his landlady one morning called in the help of a sheriff's officer. The debtor, in great perplexity, dispatched a messenger to Johnson; and Johnson, always friendly though often surly, sent back the messenger with a guinea, and promised to follow speedily. He came, and found that Goldsmith had changed the guinea, and was railing at the landlady over a bottle of Madeira. Johnson put the cork into the bottle, and entreated his friend to consider calmly how money was to be procured. Goldsmith said that he had a novel ready for the press. Johnson glanced at the manuscript, saw that there were good things in it, took it to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds, and soon returned with the money. The rent was paid, and the sheriff's officer withdrew.

[1] See the essay on Johnson, page 44, note 2, and page 45, note 1.

According to one story, Goldsmith gave his landlady a sharp reprimand for her treatment of him; according to another, he insisted on her joining him in a bowl of punch. Both stories are probably true. The novel which was thus ushered into the world was "The Vicar of Wakefield."

But before "The Vicar of Wakefield" appeared in print, came the great crisis of Goldsmith's literary life. In Christmas week, 1764, he published a poem entitled "The Traveller." It was the first work to which he had put his name, and it at once raised him to the rank of a legitimate English classic. The opinion of the most skilful critics was, that nothing finer had appeared in verse since the fourth book of "The Dunciad."[1] In one respect, "The Traveller" differs from all Goldsmith's other writings. In general his designs were bad and his execution good. In "The Traveller" the execution, though deserving of much praise, is far inferior to the design. No philosophical poem, ancient or modern, has a plan so noble, and at the same time so simple. An English wanderer, seated on a crag among the Alps, near the point where three great countries meet, looks down on the boundless prospect, reviews his long pilgrimage, recalls the varieties of scenery, of climate, of government, of religion, of national character, which he has observed, and comes to the conclusion, just or unjust, that our happiness depends little on political institutions, and much on the temper and regulation of our minds.

While the fourth edition of "The Traveller" was on the counters of the booksellers, "The Vicar of Wakefield" appeared, and rapidly obtained a popularity

[1] Published in March, 1742, three years before Pope's death.

which has lasted down to our own time, and which is likely to last as long as our language. The fable is, indeed, one of the worst that ever was constructed. It wants not merely that probability which ought to be found in a tale of common English life, but that consistency which ought to be found even in the wildest fiction about witches, giants, and fairies. But the earlier chapters have all the sweetness of pastoral poetry, together with all the vivacity of comedy. Moses and his spectacles, the Vicar and his monogamy, the Sharper and his cosmogony, the Squire proving from Aristotle that relatives are related, Olivia preparing herself for the arduous task of converting a rakish lover by studying the controversy between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, the great ladies with their scandal about Sir Tomkyn's amours and Dr. Burdock's verses, and Mr. Burchell with his "Fudge!" have caused as much harmless mirth as has ever been caused by matter packed into so small a number of pages. The latter part of the tale is unworthy of the beginning. As we approach the catastrophe, the absurdities lie thicker and thicker, and the gleams of pleasantry become rarer and rarer.[1]

The success which had attended Goldsmith as a novelist emboldened him to try his fortune as a dramatist. He wrote "The Good-natured Man," a piece which had a worse fate than it deserved. Garrick refused to produce it at Drury Lane. It was acted at Covent Garden in 1768, but was coldly received. The author, however, cleared by his benefit nights, and by the sale of the copyright, not less than five

[1] The classic account of the sale of the *Vicar* given above must be taken with many allowances. See Dobson's *Goldsmith*.

hundred pounds, — five times as much as he had made by "The Traveller" and "The Vicar of Wakefield" together. The plot of "The Good-natured Man" is, like almost all Goldsmith's plots, very ill-constructed. But some passages are exquisitely ludicrous, — much more ludicrous, indeed, than suited the taste of the town at that time. A canting, mawkish play, entitled "False Delicacy,"[1] had just had an immense run. Sentimentality was all the mode. During some years, more tears were shed at comedies than at tragedies; and a pleasantry which moved the audience to anything more than a grave smile was reprobated as low. It is not strange, therefore, that the very best scene in "The Good-natured Man" — that in which Miss Richland finds her lover attended by the bailiff and the bailiff's follower in full court-dresses — should have been mercilessly hissed, and should have been omitted after the first night.

In 1770 appeared "The Deserted Village." In mere diction and versification, this celebrated poem is fully equal, perhaps superior, to "The Traveller;" and it is generally preferred to "The Traveller" by that large class of readers who think, with Bayes in "The Rehearsal,"[2] that the only use of a plan is to bring in fine things. More discerning judges, however, while they admire the beauty of the details, are shocked by one unpardonable fault which pervades the whole. The fault which we mean is not that

[1] By Hugh Kelly (1739–1777), a small author with whom Goldsmith's relations were not pleasant.

[2] A satiric play brought out in 1672 by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham (1627–1788). It was chiefly an attack on Dryden, whom the hero, Bayes, was supposed to personate. It is often referred to but not much read at present.

theory about wealth and luxury which has so often been censured by political economists.[1] The theory is indeed false; but the poem, considered merely as a poem, is not necessarily the worse on that account. The finest poem in the Latin language — indeed, the finest didactic poem in any language — was written in defense of the silliest and meanest of all systems of natural and moral philosophy.[2] A poet may easily be pardoned for reasoning ill, but he cannot be pardoned for describing ill; for observing the world in which he lives so carelessly that his portraits bear no resemblance to the originals; for exhibiting as copies from real life monstrous combinations of things which never were, and never could be, found together. What would be thought of a painter who should mix August and January in one landscape, — who should introduce a frozen river into a harvest scene? Would it be a sufficient defense of such a picture to say that every part was exquisitely colored; that the green hedges, the apple-trees loaded with fruit, the wagons reeling under the yellow sheaves, and the sunburnt reapers wiping their foreheads, were very fine; and that the ice and the boys sliding were also very fine? To such a picture "The Deserted Village" bears a great resemblance. It is made up of incongruous parts. The village in its happy days is a true English village. The village in its decay is an Irish village. The felicity and the misery which Goldsmith has brought close together belong to two different countries, and to two different stages in the progress of society. He had assuredly never seen in his native

[1] See the concluding paragraphs of the poem.

[2] The *De Rerum Natura* of Lucretius, which is based on the philosophy of Epicurus, somewhat caricatured by Macaulay.

island such a rural paradise, such a seat of plenty, content, and tranquillity, as his Auburn. He had assuredly never seen in England all the inhabitants of such a paradise turned out of their homes in one day, and forced to emigrate in a body to America. The hamlet he had probably seen in Kent; the ejectment he had probably seen in Munster; but by joining the two, he has produced something which never was and never will be seen in any part of the world.

In 1773 Goldsmith tried his chance at Covent Garden with a second play, "She Stoops to Conquer." The manager[1] was not without great difficulty induced to bring this piece out. The sentimental comedy still reigned, and Goldsmith's comedies were not sentimental. "The Good-natured Man" had been too funny to succeed; yet the mirth of "The Good-natured Man" was sober when compared with the rich drollery of "She Stoops to Conquer," which is, in truth, an incomparable farce in five acts. On this occasion, however, genius triumphed. Pit, boxes, and galleries were in a constant roar of laughter. If any bigoted admirer of Kelly and Cumberland[2] ventured to hiss or groan, he was speedily silenced by a general cry of "Turn him out!" or "Throw him over!" Two generations have since confirmed the verdict which was pronounced on that night.

While Goldsmith was writing "The Deserted Vil-

[1] George Colman the Elder (1733 ?–1794), himself a dramatist, and so harder to please.

[2] Richard Cumberland (1732–1811), a successful but now nearly forgotten playwright. *The West - Indian* is his best known work. In his *Memoirs* he gives an amusing account of how he, with some of Goldsmith's other friends, headed by Dr. Johnson, went to the theatre prepared to make the play go through by their applause.

lage" and "She Stoops to Conquer," he was employed on works of a very different kind, — works from which he derived little reputation, but much profit. He compiled for the use of schools a "History of Rome," by which he made three hundred pounds; a "History of England," by which he made six hundred pounds; a "History of Greece," for which he received two hundred and fifty pounds; a "Natural History," for which the booksellers covenanted to pay him eight hundred guineas. These works he produced without any elaborate research, by merely selecting, abridging, and translating into his own clear, pure, and flowing language what he found in books well known to the world, but too bulky or too dry for boys and girls. He committed some strange blunders, for he knew nothing with accuracy. Thus, in his "History of England," he tells us that Naseby is in Yorkshire;[1] nor did he correct this mistake when the book was reprinted. He was very nearly hoaxed[2] into putting into the "History of Greece" an account of a battle between Alexander the Great and Montezuma. In his "Animated Nature" he relates, with faith and with perfect gravity, all the most absurd lies which he could find in books of travels about gigantic Patagonians, monkeys that preach sermons, nightingales that repeat long conversations. "If he can tell a horse from a cow," says Johnson, "that is the extent of his knowledge of zoölogy." How little Goldsmith was qualified to write about the physical sciences is sufficiently proved by two anecdotes. He on one occasion denied that the sun is longer in the northern than in the southern signs. It was vain to cite the

[1] It is in Northamptonshire.

[2] By Gibbon.

authority of Maupertuis.[1] "Maupertuis!" he cried; "I understand those matters better than Maupertuis." On another occasion he, in defiance of the evidence of his own senses, maintained obstinately, and even angrily, that he chewed his dinner by moving his upper jaw.

Yet, ignorant as Goldsmith was, few writers have done more to make the first steps in the laborious road to knowledge easy and pleasant. His compilations are widely distinguished from the compilations of ordinary book-makers. He was a great, perhaps an unequaled, master of the arts of selection and condensation. In these respects his histories of Rome and of England, and still more his own abridgments of these histories, well deserve to be studied. In general nothing is less attractive than an epitome, but the epitomes of Goldsmith, even when most concise, are always amusing; and to read them is considered by intelligent children, not as a task, but as a pleasure.

Goldsmith might now be considered as a prosperous man. He had the means of living in comfort, and even in what, to one who had so often slept in barns and on bulks, must have been luxury. His fame was great, and was constantly rising. He lived in what was intellectually far the best society of the kingdom, — in a society in which no talent or accomplishment was wanting, and in which the art of conversation was cultivated with splendid success. There probably were never four talkers more admirable in four different ways than Johnson, Burke, Beauclerk, and Garrick; and Goldsmith was on terms of intimacy with

[1] Pierre Louis Moreau de Maupertuis (1698–1759), a noted French mathematician and astronomer.

all the four. He aspired to share in their colloquial renown, but never was ambition more unfortunate. It may seem strange that a man who wrote with so much perspicuity, vivacity, and grace should have been, whenever he took a part in conversation, an empty, noisy, blundering rattle. But on this point the evidence is overwhelming. So extraordinary was the contrast between Goldsmith's published works and the silly things which he said, that Horace Walpole described him as an inspired idiot. "Noll," said Garrick, "wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll."[1] Chamier declared that it was a hard exercise of faith to believe that so foolish a chatterer could have really written "The Traveller." Even Boswell could say, with contemptuous compassion, that he liked very well to hear honest Goldsmith run on. "Yes, sir," said Johnson, "but he should not like to hear himself." Minds differ as rivers differ. There are transparent and sparkling rivers from which it is delightful to drink as they flow; to such rivers the minds of such men as Burke and Johnson may be compared. But there are rivers of which the water when first drawn is turbid and noisome, but becomes pellucid as crystal and delicious to the taste if it be suffered to stand till it has deposited a sediment; and such a river is a type of the mind of Goldsmith. His first thoughts on every subject were confused even to absurdity, but they required only a little time to work themselves clear. When he wrote, they had that time, and therefore his readers pronounced him a man of genius; but when he talked, he talked nonsense, and made himself the laughing-stock of his hearers. He was painfully sensible of

[1] See page 90, note.

his inferiority in conversation; he felt every failure keenly; yet he had not sufficient judgment and self-command to hold his tongue. His animal spirits and vanity were always impelling him to try to do the one thing which he could not do. After every attempt, he felt that he had exposed himself, and writhed with shame and vexation; yet the next moment he began again.

His associates seem to have regarded him with kindness, which, in spite of their admiration of his writings, was not unmixed with contempt. In truth, there was in his character much to love, but very little to respect. His heart was soft, even to weakness; he was so generous that he quite forgot to be just; he forgave injuries so readily that he might be said to invite them; and was so liberal to beggars that he had nothing left for his tailor and his butcher. He was vain, sensual, frivolous, profuse, improvident. One vice of a darker shade was imputed to him, envy. But there is not the least reason to believe that this bad passion, though it sometimes made him wince and utter fretful exclamations, ever impelled him to injure by wicked arts the reputation of any of his rivals. The truth probably is, that he was not more envious, but merely less prudent, than his neighbors. His heart was on his lips. All those small jealousies which are but too common among men of letters, but which a man of letters who is also a man of the world does his best to conceal, Goldsmith avowed with the simplicity of a child. When he was envious, instead of affecting indifference, instead of damning with faint praise, instead of doing injuries slyly and in the dark, he told everybody that he was envious.

"Do not, pray do not, talk of Johnson in such terms," he said to Boswell; "you harrow up my very soul." George Steevens[1] and Cumberland were men far too cunning to say such a thing. They would have echoed the praises of the man whom they envied, and then have sent to the newspapers anonymous libels upon him. Both what was good and what was bad in Goldsmith's character was to his associates a perfect security that he would never commit such villany. He was neither ill-natured enough, nor long-headed enough, to be guilty of any malicious act which required contrivance and disguise.

Goldsmith has sometimes been represented as a man of genius, cruelly treated by the world, and doomed to struggle with difficulties which at last broke his heart. But no representation can be more remote from the truth. He did, indeed, go through much sharp misery before he had done anything considerable in literature. But after his name had appeared on the title-page of "The Traveller," he had none but himself to blame for his distresses. His average income during the last seven years of his life certainly exceeded four hundred pounds a year, and four hundred pounds a year ranked among the incomes of that day at least as high as eight hundred pounds a year would rank at present. A single man living in the Temple with four hundred pounds a year might then be called opulent. Not one in ten of the young gentlemen of good families who were studying the law there had so much. But all the wealth which Lord Clive[2] had brought from Bengal, and Sir Lawrence

[1] A well-known Shakespearean scholar (1736–1800).

[2] For Robert, Lord Clive (1725–1774), see Macaulay's great essay; Sir Lawrence Dundas seems to have been a contractor to

Dundas from Germany, joined together, would not have sufficed for Goldsmith. He spent twice as much as he had. He wore fine clothes, gave dinners of several courses, paid court to venal beauties. He had also, it should be remembered to the honor of his heart though not of his head, a guinea, or five, or ten, according to the state of his purse, ready for any tale of distress, true or false. But it was not in dress or feasting, in promiscuous amours or promiscuous charities, that his chief expense lay. He had been from boyhood a gambler, and at once the most sanguine and the most unskilful of gamblers. For a time he put off the day of inevitable ruin by temporary expedients. He obtained advances from booksellers by promising to execute works which he never began. But at length this source of supply failed. He owed more than two thousand pounds, and he saw no hope of extrication from his embarrassments. His spirits and health gave way. He was attacked by a nervous fever, which he thought himself competent to treat. It would have been happy for him if his medical skill had been appreciated as justly by himself as by others. Notwithstanding the degree which he pretended to have received at Padua, he could procure no patients. "I do not practice," he once said; "I make it a rule to prescribe only for my friends." "Pray, dear Doctor," said Beauclerk, "alter your rule, and prescribe only for your enemies." Goldsmith now, in spite of this excellent advice, prescribed for himself. The remedy aggravated the malady. The sick man was induced to call in real physicians, and they at one time imagined

the army in Germany from 1748 to 1759, who amassed great wealth and was knighted in 1762, dying in 1781 (?).

that they had cured the disease. Still his weakness and restlessness continued. He could get no sleep; he could take no food. "You are worse," said one of his medical attendants, "than you should be from the degree of fever which you have. Is your mind at ease?" "No, it is not," were the last recorded words of Oliver Goldsmith. He died on the 3d of April, 1774, in his forty-sixth year. He was laid in the churchyard of the Temple; but the spot was not marked by any inscription, and is now forgotten. The coffin was followed by Burke and Reynolds. Both these great men were sincere mourners. Burke, when he heard of Goldsmith's death, had burst into a flood of tears. Reynolds had been so much moved by the news that he had flung aside his brush and palette for the day.

A short time after Goldsmith's death, a little poem appeared, which will, as long as our language lasts, associate the names of his two illustrious friends with his own. It has already been mentioned that he sometimes felt keenly the sarcasm which his wild, blundering talk brought upon him. He was, not long before his last illness, provoked into retaliating.[1] He wisely betook himself to his pen, and at that weapon he proved himself a match for all his assailants together. Within a small compass he drew with a singularly easy and vigorous pencil the characters

[1] In February, 1774, a party of his friends, dining at the St. James coffee-house without him, undertook to write some humorous epitaphs on Goldsmith. Garrick contributed the couplet: —

> "Here lies Nolly Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
> Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll."

Goldsmith's delightful *Retaliation* was the outcome of the incident.

of nine or ten of his intimate associates. Though this little work did not receive his last touches, it must always be regarded as a masterpiece. It is impossible, however, not to wish that four or five likenesses which have no interest for posterity were wanting to that noble gallery, and that their places were supplied by sketches of Johnson and Gibbon as happy and vivid as the sketches of Burke and Garrick.

Some of Goldsmith's friends and admirers honored him with a cenotaph in Westminster Abbey. Nollekens[1] was the sculptor, and Johnson wrote the inscription. It is much to be lamented that Johnson did not leave to posterity a more durable and a more valuable memorial of his friend. A life of Goldsmith would have been an inestimable addition to the "Lives of the Poets." No man appreciated Goldsmith's writings more justly than Johnson; no man was better acquainted with Goldsmith's character and habits; and no man was more competent to delineate with truth and spirit the peculiarities of a mind in which great powers were found in company with great weaknesses. But the list of poets to whose works Johnson was requested by the booksellers to furnish prefaces ended with Lyttelton,[2] who died in 1773. The line seems to have been drawn expressly for the purpose of excluding the person whose portrait would have most fitly closed the series. Goldsmith, however, has been fortunate in his biographers. Within a few years his life has been written by Mr. Prior,[3]

[1] Joseph Nollekens (1737–1823).

[2] George, Lord Lyttelton (1709–1773), a better prose writer than poet.

[3] Mr. (afterwards Sir) James Prior (1790?–1869).

by Mr. Washington Irving, and by Mr. Forster.[1] The diligence of Mr. Prior deserves great praise; the style of Mr. Washington Irving is always pleasing; but the highest place must in justice be assigned to the eminently interesting work of Mr. Forster.

[1] John Forster (1812–1876), an indefatigable biographer. He wrote lives of Landor and Dickens among others. His *Goldsmith* appeared in 1848.

EXTRACTS FROM JOHNSON, BOSWELL, AND PIOZZI.

The following are quotations from Johnson's Works, Boswell's *Johnson*, and Madame Piozzi's *Anecdotes of Johnson* to which Macaulay refers, directly or indirectly, upon the pages designated.

PAGE 3.

> Of the power of his memory, for which he was all his life eminent to a degree almost incredible, the following early instance was told me in his presence at Lichfield, in 1776, by his step-daughter, Mrs. Lucy Porter, as related to her by his mother. When he was a child in petticoats, and had learnt to read, Mrs. Johnson one morning put the common prayer-book into his hands, pointed to the collect for the day, and said, "Sam, you must get this by heart." She went upstairs, leaving him to study it: but by the time she had reached the second floor, she heard him following her. "What's the matter?" said she. "I can say it," he replied; and repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice. BOSWELL.

PAGE 8.

> He had another particularity, of which none of his friends ever ventured to ask an explanation. It appeared to me some superstitious habit, which he had contracted early, and from which he had never called upon his reason to disentangle him. This was his anxious care to go out or in at a door or passage, by a certain number of steps from a certain point, or at least so as that either his right or his left foot (I am not certain which) should constantly make the first actual movement when he came close to the door or passage. Thus I conjecture: for I have, upon innumerable occasions, observed him suddenly stop, and then seem to count his steps with a deep earnestness; and when he had neglected or gone wrong in this sort of magical movement, I have seen him go back again, put himself in a proper posture to begin the ceremony, and, having gone through

it, break from his abstraction, walk briskly on, and join his companion. A strange instance of something of this nature, even when on horseback, happened when he was in the Isle of Skye. Sir Joshua Reynolds had observed him to go a good way about, rather than cross a particular alley in Leicester Fields; but this Sir Joshua imputed to his having had some disagreeable recollection associated with it.

BOSWELL.

PAGE 11.

I know not for what reason the marriage ceremony was not performed at Birmingham; but a resolution was taken that it should be at Derby, for which place the bride and bridegroom set out on horseback, I suppose in very good humour. But though Mr. Topham Beauclerk used archly to mention Johnson's having told him, with much gravity, "Sir, it was a love-marriage on both sides," I have had from my illustrious friend the following curious account of their journey to church upon the nuptial morn (9th July): — "Sir, she had read the old romances, and had got into her head the fantastical notion that a woman of spirit should use her lover like a dog. So, sir, at first she told me that I rode too fast, and she could not keep up with me; and when I rode a little slower, she passed me, and complained that I lagged behind. I was not to be made the slave of caprice; and I resolved to begin as I meant to end. I therefore pushed on briskly, till I was fairly out of her sight. The road lay between two hedges, so I was sure she could not miss it; and I contrived that she should soon come up with me. When she did, I observed her to be in tears." This, it must be allowed, was a singular beginning of connubial felicity; but there is no doubt, that Johnson, though he thus showed a manly firmness, proved a most affectionate and indulgent husband to the last moment of Mrs. Johnson's life; and in his *Prayers and Meditations*, we find very remarkable evidence that his regard and fondness for her never ceased even after her death. BOSWELL.

PAGE 14.

"I dined," said he, "very well for eight-pence, with very good company, at the Pine-Apple in New Street, just by. Several of them had travelled. They expected to meet every day; but did not know one another's names. It used to cost the

rest a shilling, for they drank wine; but I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny; so that I was quite well served, nay, better than the rest for they gave the waiter nothing." BOSWELL.

Johnson loved his dinner exceedingly, and has often said in my hearing, perhaps for my edification, "that wherever the dinner is ill-got there is poverty, or there is avarice, or there is stupidity; in short, the family is somehow grossly wrong: for," continued he, "a man seldom thinks with more earnestness of anything than he does of his dinner; and if he cannot get that well dressed, he should be suspected of inaccuracy in other things." One day, when he was speaking upon the subject, I asked him, if he ever huffed his wife about his dinner? "So often," replied he, "that at last she called to me, and said, 'Nay, hold, Mr. Johnson, and do not make a farce of thanking God for a dinner which in a few minutes you will protest not eatable.'" PIOZZI.

PAGE 17.

Two of my companions, who are growing old in idleness are Tom Tempest and Jack Sneaker. Both of them consider themselves as neglected by their parties, and therefore entitled to credit; for why should they favour ingratitude? They are both men of integrity, where no factious interest is to be promoted; and both lovers of truth, when they are not heated with political debate.

Tom Tempest is a steady friend to the house of Stuart. He can recount the prodigies that have appeared in the sky, and the calamities that have afflicted the nation every year from the Revolution; and is of opinion, that, if the exiled family had continued to reign, there would have neither been worms in our ships, nor caterpillars on our trees. He wonders that the nation was not awakened by the hard frost to a revocation of the true king, and is hourly afraid that the whole island will be lost in the sea. He believes that King William burnt Whitehall that he might steal the furniture; and that Tillotson died an atheist. Of Queen Anne he speaks with more tenderness, owns that she meant well, and can tell by whom and why she was poisoned. In the succeeding reigns all has been corruption, malice, and design. He believes that nothing ill has ever happened for these forty

years by chance or error: he holds that the battle of Dettingen was won by mistake, and that of Fontenoy lost by contract; that the Victory was sunk by a private order; that Cornhill was fired by emissaries from the council; and the arch of Westminster bridge was so contrived as to sink, on purpose that the nation might be put to charge. He considers the new road to Islington as an encroachment on liberty, and often asserts that *broad wheels* will be the ruin of England.

Tom is generally vehement and noisy, but nevertheless has some secrets which he always communicates in a whisper. Many and many a time has Tom told me, in a corner, that our miseries were almost at an end, and that we should see, in a month, another monarch on the throne; the time elapses without a revolution; Tom meets me again with new intelligence, the whole scheme is now settled, and we shall see great events in another month.

JOHNSON, *Idler*, No. 10.

Nor deem, when Learning her last prize bestows,
The glitt'ring eminence exempt from woes;
See, when the vulgar 'scape, despised or awed,
Rebellion's vengeful talons seize on Laud.
From meaner minds though smaller fines content,
The plunder'd palace, or sequester'd tent;
Mark'd out by dangerous parts, he meets the shock,
And fatal Learning leads him to the block:
Around his tomb let Art and Genius weep,
But hear his death, ye blockheads, hear and sleep.

JOHNSON, *The Vanity of Human Wishes.*

PAGE 18.

Mr. Johnson's hatred of Scotch is so well known, and so many of his *bonmots* expressive of that hatred have been already repeated in so many books and pamphlets, that it is perhaps scarcely worth while to write down the conversation between him and a friend of that nation, who always resides in London, and who at his return from the Hebrides asked him, with a firm tone of voice, what he thought of his country? "That it is a very vile country to be sure, sir;" returned for answer Dr. Johnson. "Well, sir!" replies the other, somewhat mortified, "God made it." "Certainly he did," answers Mr. Johnson again, "but we must always remember that he made it for Scotchmen, and comparisons are odious, Mr. S——; but God made hell." PIOZZI.

PAGE 22.

Sir Joshua Reynolds told me, that upon his return from Italy he met with it [the *Life of Savage*] in Devonshire, knowing nothing of its author, and began to read it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece. It seized his attention so strongly, that, not being able to lay down the book till he had finished it, when he attempted to move, he found his arm totally benumbed. The rapidity with which this work was composed is a wonderful circumstance. Johnson has been heard to say, "I wrote forty-eight of the printed octavo pages of the 'Life of Savage' at a sitting; but then I sat up all night." BOSWELL.

PAGE 23.

While the Dictionary was going forward, Johnson lived part of the time in Holborn, part in Gough Square, Fleet Street; and he had an upper room fitted up like a counting-house for the purpose, in which he gave to the copyists their several tasks. The words partly taken from other dictionaries, and partly supplied by himself, having been first written down with spaces left between them, he delivered in writing their etymologies, definitions, and various significations. The authorities were copied from the books themselves, in which he had marked the passages with a black-lead pencil, the traces of which could easily be effaced. I have seen several of them, in which that trouble had not been taken; so that they were just as when used by the copyists. It is remarkable, that he was so attentive in the choice of the passages in which words were authorised, that one may read page after page of his Dictionary with improvement and pleasure. BOSWELL.

PAGE 24.

In full-blown dignity, see Wolsey stand,
Law in his voice, and fortune in his hand:
To him the church, the realm, their powers consign,
Through him the rays of regal bounty shine,
Turn'd by his nod the stream of honour flows,
His smile alone security bestows:
Still to new heights his restless wishes tower,
Claim leads to claim, and power advances power;
Till conquest unresisted cease to please,
And rights submitted, left him none to cease.
At length his sovereign frowns — the train of state
Mark the keen glance, and watch the sign to hate.

Where'er he turns, he meets a stranger's eye,
His suppliants scorn him, and his followers fly;
Now drops at once the pride of awful state,
The golden canopy, the glittering plate,
The regal palace, the luxurious board,
The liveried army and the menial lord.
With age, with cares, with maladies oppress'd,
He seeks the refuge of monastic rest.
Grief aids disease, remember'd folly stings,
And his last sighs reproach the faith of kings.

JOHNSON, *The Vanity of Human Wishes.*

PAGE 25.

On what foundation stands the warrior's pride,
How just his hopes, let Swedish Charles decide;
A frame of adamant, a soul of fire,
No dangers fright him, and no labours tire;
O'er love, o'er fear, extends his wide domain,
Unconquer'd lord of pleasure and of pain;
No joys to him pacific sceptres yield,
War sounds the trump, he rushes to the field;
Behold surrounding kings their power combine,
And one capitulate, and one resign:
Peace courts his hand, but spreads her charms in vain;
"Think nothing gain'd," he cries, "till nought remain,
On Moscow's walls till Gothic standards fly,
And all be mine beneath the Polar sky."
. . . . . .
His fall was destined to a barren strand,
A petty fortress, and a dubious hand;
He left a name, at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral, or adorn a tale.

JOHNSON, *The Vanity of Human Wishes.*

As I went into his room the morning of my birthday once and said to him, "Nobody sends me any verses now, because I am five-and-thirty years old; and Stella was fed with them till forty-six, I remember." My being just recovered from illness and confinement will account for the manner in which he burst out suddenly, for so he did without the least previous hesitation whatsoever, and without having entertained the smallest intention towards it half a minute before: —

"Oft in danger, yet alive,
We are come to thirty-five;
Long may better years arrive,
Better years than thirty-five.

Could philosophers contrive
Life to stop at thirty-five,
Time his hours should never drive
O'er the bounds of thirty-five.
High to soar, and deep to dive,
Nature gives at thirty-five.
Ladies, stock and tend your hive,
Trifle not at thirty-five;
For howe'er we boast and strive,
Life declines from thirty-five:
He that ever hopes to thrive
Must begin by thirty-five;
And all who wisely wish to wive
Must look on Thrale at thirty-five."

"And now," said he, as I was writing them down, "you may see what it is to come for poetry to a Dictionary-maker; you may observe that the rhymes run in alphabetical order." And so they do. PIOZZI.

PAGE 27.

ON THE DEATH OF MR. ROBERT LEVET, A PRACTISER IN PHYSIC.

Condemn'd to Hope's delusive mind,
As on we toil from day to day,
By sudden blasts, or slow decline,
Our social comforts drop away.

Well tried through many a varying year,
See Levet to the grave descend,
Officious, innocent, sincere,
Of every friendless name the friend.

Yet still he fills affection's eye,
Obscurely wise, and coarsely kind;
Nor letter'd arrogance deny
Thy praise to merit unrefined.

When fainting nature call'd for aid,
And hovering death prepared the blow,
His vigorous remedy display'd
The power of art without the show.

In misery's darkest cavern known,
His useful care was ever nigh,
Where hopeless anguish pour'd his groan,
And lonely want retired to die.

No summons mock'd by chill delay,
No petty gain disdain'd by pride,
The modest wants of every day
The toil of every day supplied.

His virtues walk'd their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And sure th' Eternal Master found
The single talent well employ'd.

The busy day — the peaceful night,
Unfelt, uncounted, glided by;
His frame was firm — his powers were bright,
Though now his *eightieth* year was nigh.

Then, with no fiery throbbing pain,
No cold gradations of decay,
Death broke at once the vital chain,
And freed his soul the nearest way.

JOHNSON.

EPITAPH FOR MR. HOGARTH.

The hand of him here torpid lies,
That drew th' essential form of grace;
Here closed in death th' attentive eyes,
That saw the manners in the face.

JOHNSON.

PAGE 28.

"Almighty God, the giver of all good things, without whose help all labour is ineffectual, and without whose grace all wisdom is folly: grant, I beseech Thee, that in this my undertaking, thy Holy Spirit may not be withheld from me, but that I may promote thy glory, and the Salvation both of myself and others; grant this, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Amen."

JOHNSON, *Prayer on The Rambler.*

PAGE 30.

Her wedding-ring when she became his wife was, after death, preserved by him, as long as he lived, with an affectionate care, in a little round wooden box, in the inside of which he placed a slip of paper, thus inscribed by him in fair characters, as follows:—

"Eheu!
"ELIZ. JOHNSON
"Nupta Jul. 9° 1736,
"Mortua, eheu!
"Mart. 17° 1752." — Boswell.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD.

February 7, 1755.

"My Lord,

"I have been lately informed by the proprietor of 'The World' that two papers, in which my 'Dictionary' is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre;* — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I

am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long awakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation. My Lord, your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant, SAM. JOHNSON."

There is a curious minute circumstance which struck me in comparing the various editions of Johnson's "Imitations of Juvenal." In the tenth Satire one of the couplets upon the vanity of wishes even for literary distinction stood thus: —

"Yet think what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the *garret*, and the jail."

But after experiencing the uneasiness which Lord Chesterfield's fallacious patronage made him feel, he dismissed the word *garret* from the sad group, and in all the subsequent editions the line stands

"Toil, envy, want, the *Patron*, and the jail."

BOSWELL.

PAGE 32.

The Preface furnishes an eminent instance of a double talent, of which Johnson was fully conscious. Sir Joshua Reynolds heard him say, "There are two things which I am confident I can do very well: one is an introduction to any literary work, stating what it is to contain, and how it should be executed in the most perfect manner; the other is a conclusion, showing from various causes why the execution has not been equal to what the author promised to himself and to the public." BOSWELL.

"In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the author, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may

gratify curiosity to inform it, that the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurity of retirement, or under the shelter of academick bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow: and it may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and coöperating diligence of the Italian academicians, did not secure them from the censure of Beni; if the embodied criticks of France when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its economy, and give their second edition another form; I may surely be contented without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloomy solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wish to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise."

JOHNSON, *Preface* to the *Dictionary*, concluding paragraph.

PAGE 33.

A few of his definitions must be admitted to be erroneous. Thus, *Windward* and *Leeward*, though directly of opposite meaning, are defined identically the same way; as to which inconsiderable specks it is enough to observe, that his Preface announces that he was aware that there might be many such in so immense a work; nor was he at all disconcerted when an instance was pointed out to him. A lady once asked him how he came to define *Pastern* the *knee* of a horse: instead of making an elaborate defence, as she expected, he at once answered, 'Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance."

BOSWELL.

PAGE 34.

Many of these excellent essays were written as hastily as an ordinary letter. Mr. Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit to Oxford, asking him one evening how long it was till the post went out; and on being told about half an

hour, he exclaimed, "Then we shall do very well." He upon this instantly sat down and finished an "Idler," which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, "Sir (said he) you shall not do more than I have done myself." He then folded it up and sent it off. BOSWELL.

PAGE 44.

That the most minute singularities which belonged to him, and made very observable parts of his appearance and manner, may not be omitted, it is requisite to mention, that, while talking, or even musing as he sat in his chair, he commonly held his head to one side towards his right shoulder, and shook it in a tremulous manner, moving his body backwards and forwards, and rubbing his left knee in the same direction, with the palm of his hand. In the intervals of articulating he made various sounds with his mouth, sometimes as if ruminating, or what is called chewing the cud, sometimes giving a half-whistle, sometimes making his tongue play backwards from the roof of his mouth, as if clucking like a hen, and sometimes protruding it against his upper gums in front, as if pronouncing quickly, under his breath, *too, too, too:* all this accompanied sometimes with a thoughtful look, but more frequently with a smile. Generally, when he had concluded a period, in the course of a dispute, by which time he was a good deal exhausted by violence and vociferation, he used to blow out his breath like a whale. This, I suppose, was a relief to his lungs; and seemed in him to be a contemptuous mode of expression, as if he had made the arguments of his opponent fly like chaff before the wind. BOSWELL.

PAGE 45.

Not very long after the institution of our Club, Sir Joshua Reynolds was speaking of it to Garrick. "I like it much," said he, "I think I shall be of you." When Sir Joshua mentioned this to Dr. Johnson, he was much displeased with the actor's conceit. "*He'll be of us*," said Johnson, "how does he know we will *permit* him? The first duke in England has no right to hold such language." However, when Garrick was regularly proposed, some time afterwards, Johnson, though he had taken a momentary offence at his arrogance, warmly and kindly supported him, and he was

accordingly elected, was a most agreeable member, and continued to attend our meetings to the time of his death.

BOSWELL.

PAGE 45.

Dr. Goldsmith said once to Dr. Johnson that he wished for some additional members to the Literary Club, to give it an agreeable variety, "for," said he, "there can now be nothing new among us: we have travelled over one another's minds." Johnson seemed a little angry, and said, "Sir, you have not travelled over *my* mind, I promise you."

BOSWELL.

PAGE 61.

"Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by Thy grace, that I may with humble and sincere thankfulness remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place, and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when Thou givest and when Thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me. To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide and defend them, that they may so pass through this world as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."

"I was called early," his note continues, "I packed up my bundles and used the foregoing prayer, with my morning devotions somewhat, I think, enlarged. Being earlier than the family, I read St. Paul's farewell, in the Acts, and then, read fortuitously in the Gospels, which was my parting use of the library."

JOHNSON, *Prayer on leaving Thrale's Family.*

PAGE 62.

No. 103.

SATURDAY, April 5, 1760.

Respicere ad longæ jussit spatia ultima vitæ. *Juv.*

Much of the pain and pleasure of mankind arises from the conjectures which every one makes of the thoughts of others; we all enjoy praise which we do not hear, and resent contempt which we do not see. The Idler may therefore be forgiven, if he suffers his imagination to represent to him what his readers will say or think when they are informed that they have now his last paper in their hands.

Value is more frequently raised by scarcity than by use. That which lay neglected when it was common, rises in estimation as its quantity becomes less. We seldom learn the true want of what we have, till it is discovered that we can have no more.

This essay will, perhaps, be read with care even by those who have not yet attended to any other ; and he that finds this late attention recompensed, will not forbear to wish that he had bestowed it sooner.

Though the Idler and his readers have contracted no close friendship, they are perhaps both unwilling to part. There are few things not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, "this is the last." Those who never could agree together, shed tears when mutual discontent has determined them to final separation; of a place which has been frequently visited, though without pleasure, the last look is taken with heaviness of heart ; and the Idler, with all his chillness of tranquillity, is not wholly unaffected by the thought that his last essay is now before him.

This secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being, whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful. We always make a secret comparison between a part and the whole : the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination ; when we have done anything for the last time, we involuntarily reflect that a part of the days allotted us is past, and that as more are past there are less remaining.

It is very happily and kindly provided, that in every life there are certain pauses and interruptions which force consideration upon the careless, and seriousness upon the light ; points of time where one course of action ends, and another begins ; and by vicissitudes of fortune, or alteration of employment, by changes of place or loss of friendship, we are forced to say of something, "this is the last."

An even and unvaried tenour of life always hides from our apprehension the approach of its end. Succession is not perceived but by variation ; he that lives to-day as he lived yesterday, and expects that as the present day is, such will be the morrow, easily conceives time as running in a circle and returning to itself. The uncertainty of our duration is impressed commonly by dissimilitude of condition ; it is only

by finding life changeable that we are reminded of its shortness.

This conviction, however forcible at every new impression, is every moment fading from the mind ; and partly by the inevitable incursion of new images, and partly by voluntary exclusion of unwelcome thoughts, we are again exposed to the universal fallacy ; and we must do another thing for the last time, before we consider that the time is nigh when we shall do no more.

As the last Idler is published in that solemn week which the Christian world has always set apart for the examination of the conscience, the review of life, the extinction of earthly desires, and the renovation of holy purposes ; I hope that my readers are already disposed to view every incident with seriousness, and improve it by meditation ; and that when they see this series of trifles brought to a conclusion, they will consider that, by outliving the Idler, they have passed weeks, months, and years, which are now no longer in their power ; that an end must in time be put to everything great, as to everything little ; that to life must come its last hour, and to this system of being its last day, the hour at which probation ceases and repentance will be vain : the day in which every work of the hand, and imagination of the heart shall be brought to judgment, and an everlasting futurity shall be determined by the past. JOHNSON.

PAGE 62.

TO MRS. PIOZZI.

LONDON, July 8th, 1784.

DEAR MADAM, —

What you have done, however I may lament it, I have no pretence to resent, as it has not been injurious to me ; I therefore breathe out one sigh more of tenderness, perhaps useless, but at least sincere.

I wish that God may grant you every blessing, that you may be happy in this world for its short continuance, and eternally happy in a better state ; and whatever I can contribute to your happiness I am very ready to repay, for that kindness which soothed twenty years of a life radically wretched.

Do not think slightly of the advice which I now presume to offer. Prevail upon Mr. Piozzi to settle in England : you

may live here with more dignity than in Italy, and with more security; your rank will be higher, and your fortune more under your own eye. I desire not to detail all my reasons; but every argument of prudence and interest is for England, and only some phantoms of imagination seduce you to Italy.

I am afraid, however, that my counsel is vain, yet I have eased my heart by giving it.

When Queen Mary took the resolution of sheltering herself in England, the Archbishop of St. Andrews, attempting to dissuade her, attended on her journey; and when they came to the irremediable stream that separated the two kingdoms, walked by her side into the water, in the middle of which he seized her bridle, and with earnestness proportioned to her danger and his own affection pressed her to return. The queen went forward. If the parallel reaches thus far, may it go no farther. — The tears stand in my eyes.

I am going into Derbyshire, and hope to be followed by your good wishes, for I am, with great affection, your, &c.,

JOHNSON.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY.

Special points for investigation are suggested throughout the footnotes to the essay; to these the following may be added: —

Endeavor through reading such books as *Tom Brown's School-days* to get a good idea of the life led by a pupil of a great English public school.

Consider in connection with Johnson's experiences at Oxford the alienation from their universities of such great writers as Milton, Dryden, Gibbon, and Shelley.

Name other great English authors whose physical defects were notorious, e. g. Pope.

Examine one of the early volumes of *The Gentleman's Magazine.*

Examine a few pages of Johnson's *Dictionary* and compare them with some great modern dictionary.

Read Johnson's *London*, *Vanity of Human Wishes*, and *On the Death of Mr. Robert Levet.*

Read *Rasselas*, and try to form an opinion as to the justice of Macaulay's criticism, also to determine why the story became and has remained a classic.

Compare Johnson's *Irene* with Addison's *Cato* and read the chapter on the drama of the eighteenth century in Brander Matthews's *The Development of the Drama.* This chapter can also be found in *The Sewanee Review* for January, 1903.

Read Johnson's account of Gray in his *Lives of the Poets*, and compare with it the essays on Gray by Matthew Arnold and James Russell Lowell.

Read one or more of the best of Johnson's *Lives*, e. g. that of Cowley. (See page 59.)

Read one or more of the best of the *Rambler* papers (page 30) and compare Johnson's early with his later style.

Read Johnson's Preface to his edition of Shakespeare. (Part of this may be found in Garnett's *English Prose from Elizabeth to Victoria.*)

Widen your acquaintance with Garrick, Burke, Gibbon, Goldsmith, and others of Dr. Johnson's great contemporaries, using the articles in Craik's *English Prose*, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, histories of English literature in the eighteenth century

and the bibliographies given in such a book as J. Scott Clark's *Study of English Prose Writers.*

What part was played by Dr. Johnson in the publication of Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield?*

Contrast the positions taken by Johnson and Burke with regard to the struggle of the American colonies against Great Britain.

Is it likely that any one in our day could become such a literary dictator as Johnson was?

An imaginary day
of Fleet Street

Johnson and the Literary
club.

List of Johnson's friends
" " " works.

Some facts of Johnson's life

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